National Parks for the 21st Century

THE VAIL AGENDA

Report and Recommendations to
the Director of the National Park Service
1993

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National Parks for the 21st Century

THE VAIL AGENDA

OUR NATIONAL PARKS:
CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
An International Symposium

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To The Readers of This Book:

We are pleased to send you this second edition of the Vail Agenda. The reprinting was made possible by the generous private donations received to conduct the 75th Anniversary Symposium. While the report has been modified slightly in format, the text remains unchanged.

The Steering Committee is most pleased to have included in this, your personal copy, messages from Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, and Director of the National Park Service Roger Kennedy. Their endorsement and heightened commitment to encourage and permit follow through on most of the recommendations, comes at the right time, before doubts harden into convictions as to Service resolve to take meaningful action.

No conference, task force, or study report by itself, can have an important and lasting effect. That can only be produced by dedicated and intelligent followup, leadership and actions, to break the "gridlock of government". It

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Henry Diamond
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The 75th Anniversary Symposium was launched and brought to its present state of completion through the leadership of key individuals. The Steering Committee wishes to express special thanks to: Manuel Lujan, Jr., Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior; Michael Hayden, Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior; James Ridenour, Director, National Park Service; and Herbert S. Cables, Jr., Deputy Director, National Park Service and Chair of 75th Anniversary Symposium. We also wish to thank the senior advisors Richard W. Marks, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico and Katherine Stevenson, National Park Service, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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Foreword

The many units and programs of our national park system represent a profound expression of our national character. They are able to communicate, educate, and renew in us the values we share in America's unsurpassed natural beauty, unique history, and cultural richness. If we are to continue to pursue these values as we enter the next century, we must be mindful that protection and stewardship of the system will require a National Park Service that is equipped with the most capable leadership, strongest organizational commitment, and best policies that this nation can provide. To this end, the great effort and wise counsel of all who contributed to N*ational Parks for the 21st Century: The Vail Agenda* have built an invaluable foundation.

We should recognize that the process behind *The Vail Agenda* gives us an important lesson in democratic government. Bringing together thoughtful individuals from within and outside government and spanning a universe of viewpoints and interests takes courage, leadership, and principled goodwill. To all who devoted themselves to the 75th Anniversary Symposium of the National Park Service, and to those who made it possible, I say a job "well done." The outstanding work that has been launched, however, must not end with words—and so I also offer my commitment to push forward with the ideals and strategic vision that *The Vail Agenda* so thoughtfully sets forth.

The Honorable Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of the Interior

Preface

Colleagues and friends of the National Park Service: This is an astonishing document. Self-scrutiny and self-renewal are rare enough among individuals. For 20,000 people to undertake such a task together is, so far as I know, unprecedented. Bureaucratic self-renewal might be thought to be an oxymoron, but, as the National Park Service has shown, it is not. The vision of some, the energy and deep seriousness of more, and the diligent refusal to quit of others has conveyed a hundred unlikelihoods into a hundred possibilities. We shall do our best to encourage and permit most of these hundred to become realities.

I was not lucky enough to be at Vail and have not yet earned a right to claim a role in keeping the flame alive. My predecessor, Jim Ridenour, recognized and supported the circumstances that made the Vail process a reality and thus a remarkable document was created. The best thanks we can offer is to get on with the job. And that we will do.

Roger G. Kennedy
Director, National Park Service

1

Overview

Introduction

The National Park Service is charged with the management of the nation's most precious natural and cultural resources. These resources are inextricably woven into our national heritage, and they provide citizens the world over with invaluable opportunities for recreation, appreciation of beauty, historical reflection, cultural enrichment, and environmental education. It is the responsibility of those involved in park management and policy formulation to ensure the protection of the resources managed by the National Park Service. Yet, fulfilling this enormous responsibility is neither easy nor free of controversy.

At this, the time of its seventy-fifth anniversary, the National Park Service faces a broad range of challenges to its mission to manage and protect the national park system. An ever-growing population continues to impact upon park units, often bringing traces of economic and social activities that are inimical to the purposes the parks are designed to foster. Visitor levels and demographic mixes are changing, as are the number and types of sites that the Service must manage. In a global context, the Service is being looked to as a model of conservation and preservation management—a model that can teach valuable lessons to a world increasingly concerned with environmental degradation, threats to wilderness values, and rapid cultural and historical change. To perform capably under these kinds of pressures, the Service itself must be innovative and well-managed. It must be guided by wise public policies and capable leadership.

The National Park Service has a phenomenally dedicated work force, some of the nation's most treasured resources under its management, and widespread support from the American public. At the same time, however, it suffers from declining morale, an increasingly diffuse set of park units and programs that it is mandated to manage, serious fiscal constraints, and personnel and organizational structures that often impede its performance.

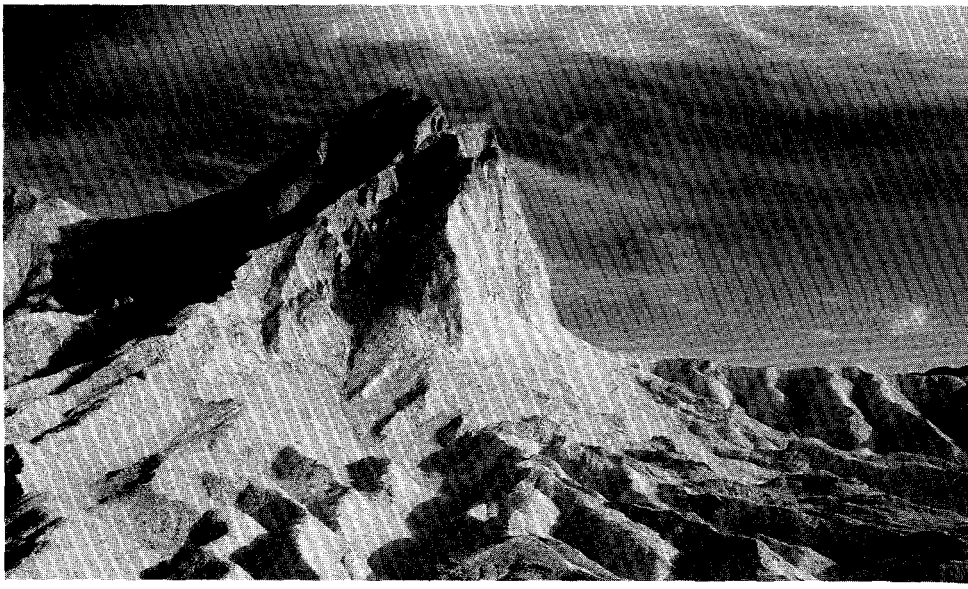
To address these and related issues of critical importance to the national park system, the Service initiated an intensive review of its responsibilities and prospects. This process was undertaken in cooperation with other leading institutions concerned with management of the national park system. The central focus of the process was the 75th Anniversary Symposium "Our National Parks: Challenges and Strategies for the 21st Century," which was held in Vail, Colorado in October 1991. This event brought together nearly 700 experts and interested parties from inside and outside the Service to consider the future of the national park system.

The symposium has been guided by a Steering Committee, charged with preparing a comprehensive report and set of recommendations for improved park system stewardship and NPS management for the director of the National Park Service. This is the Steering Committee's report.

If the National Park Service is to adequately meet the challenges before it, park system policy and management must be guided by a clear sense of its role and purpose. The initial charge of the United States Congress to the National Park Service was articulated in the legislation which established the Service on August 25, 1916:

> The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations . . . by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

While this charge still stands, the Service's purposes have evolved significantly over the last seventy-five years and now encompass broad leadership responsibilities and functions external to the boundaries of the national park system. At the time of its seventy-fifth anniversary, the National Park Service is called upon to play a broad role of preserving, pro-



Death Valley National Monument

tecting, and conveying to the public the meaning of those natural and cultural resources that contribute to the nation's values, character, and experience. The Steering Committee believes that it is important to reaffirm these fundamental elements of the Service's contemporary role and to assert a vision of the National Park Service as it moves toward the twenty-first century. Taken together, six strategic objectives constitute this vision:

Resource Stewardship and Protection The primary responsibility of the National Park Service must be protection of park resources.

Access and Enjoyment Each park unit should be managed to provide the nation's diverse public with access to and recreational and educational enjoyment of the lessons contained in that unit, while maintaining unimpaired those unique attributes that are its contribution to the national park system.

Education and Interpretation It should be the responsibility of the National Park Service to interpret and convey each park unit's and the park system's contributions to the nation's values, character, and experience.

Proactive Leadership The National Park Service must be a leader in local, national, and international park affairs, actively pursuing the mission of the national park system and assisting others in managing their park resources and values.

Science and Research The National Park Service must engage in a sustained and integrated program of natural, cultural, and social science resource management and research aimed at acquiring and using the information needed to manage and protect park resources.

Professionalism The National Park Service must create and maintain a highly professional organization and work force.

The Steering Committee recommends that the National Park Service explicitly endorse these strategic objectives. They will provide direction to needed reforms and function as criteria against which specific actions and strategies can be judged.

The 75th Anniversary Symposium: A Foundation for Change

On the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of its establishment, the National Park Service chose to dedicate itself to improving its future and the future of the invaluable resources for which it is responsible, rather than merely celebrating its history and past achievements. It was certainly within the power of the National Park Service to tap its public support for a burst of congratulations. Instead, in an act of leadership of the kind this report urges, and in an illustration of democratic government at its best, the seventy-fifth anniversary was used as a vehicle for constructive criticism, self-examination, and commitment to greater responsibility. This commitment has been made at every level of the Service. Throughout the Service, individuals have stepped forward to participate in the 75th Anniversary Symposium. And the agency has opened itself up to examination by concerned "outsiders" in a process of mutual and open deliberation.

The 75th Anniversary Symposium represents a unique event, and perhaps a turning point, in the history of the nation's park policies. In spite of the fact that the National Park Service is widely and deeply respected by the general public, which sees the Service reflected through the national treasures in its charge, the agency is beset by controversy,

concern, weakened morale, and declining effectiveness. The symposium revealed a deeply disturbing sense that the nation is risking a deterioration of its natural and cultural heritage that not even the most dedicated personnel can effectively prevent.

The symposium was cooperatively convened under the direction of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, World Wildlife Fund/The Conservation Foundation, the National Park Foundation, and the National Park Service. Development of the symposium and the related process was guided by a Steering Committee which was established to advise the director of the National Park Service in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The Steering Committee has been under the chairmanship of William J. Briggle, a distinguished career veteran of the National Park Service, and the symposium has been chaired by Henry L. Diamond, a leading citizen advocate of the parks. Funding was drawn primarily from philanthropic foundations and the private sector, with additional support from the Service. By far the greatest contribution of the Service itself has been the time and effort of hundreds, if not thousands, of individual employees who have offered candid and insightful comments, critiques, and recommendations throughout the process.

This contribution has been mirrored by the participation of a broad spectrum of non-Park Service individuals and organizations in the symposium process. The process has benefitted immeasurably from the involvement of concerned interest groups, scholars, resource professionals, congressional and administration representatives, federal, tribal, state, and local officials, the business community, and the general public. Hundreds of individuals from these constituencies have contributed their effort and insight in small working group sessions, at public meetings, and through written submissions during public comment periods.

The symposium was designed to function as a working congress. As such, it was charged by the Steering Committee with reviewing the problems and challenges confronting the National Park Service, deliberating issues and options, and then proposing strategies and recommendations. To assist in gathering the information, knowledge, and perspectives it would need to produce a balanced and comprehensive report for the director of the National Park Service, the Steering Committee convened "Working Groups" of knowledgeable, insightful, and diverse individuals. These Working Groups were asked to consider four encompassing areas

of NPS policy and management: organizational renewal, park use and enjoyment, environmental leadership, and resource stewardship.

The Working Groups were chaired by four eminent leaders in matters of policy and management: Philip Odeen (regional managing partner of Coopers & Lybrand)/Organizational Renewal; John Sawhill (president of The Nature Conservancy)/Resource Stewardship; Charles Jordan (superintendent of Parks and Recreation for the City of Portland, Oregon)/Park Use and Enjoyment; and Daniel Evans (former governor and United States Senator from Washington)/Environmental Leadership. In addition to the chairperson, each Working Group consisted of a vice chair, three managers from the National Park Service, and five citizen members. The NPS members represented various park units and programs and a broad range of professional experience and expertise. Citizen members of the Working Groups also represented a broad range of backgrounds, perspectives, experience, and knowledge. All were invited to participate on the basis of their reputations for thoughtfulness, open-mindedness, and capacity for innovative thought.

The Working Groups were formed in spring 1991, and each met twice in extended working sessions. At these sessions, problems and challenges were discussed, opinions were sought and heard, and preliminary recommendations were formulated. Interested individuals within and outside the Service provided written and oral comments to the Working Groups. At various points throughout the process, congressional representatives and their staffs as well as key members of the executive branch were consulted. Their perspectives and insights contributed to the scope and depth of this review.

Based upon extensive deliberations and discussions, the Working Groups produced draft reports which served as the bases for debate and discussion among the participants in the Vail Symposium. Nearly half of the people who attended were from organizations and institutions outside the National Park Service. They represented an extremely diverse array of interests and perspectives and dramatically underscored the fact that the Service cannot function in a social, political, or institutional vacuum. The frank dialogue that occurred at Vail has contributed crucially to the symposium process, and will inform and strengthen the Service's efforts as it moves to implement the resulting recommendations.

During the symposium, participants engaged in dozens of discussion sessions, critiquing, modifying, and expanding upon the preliminary rec-

ommendations of the Working Groups. The vice chairs and members of the Working Groups led these substantive policy discussions. In addition, plenary sessions presented the views of distinguished governmental and citizen leaders on national and international park system affairs.

The Working Groups finalized their reports to the Steering Committee after reviewing the input from participants, as well as the written and oral submissions from the public and from NPS employees. These reports, together with past reports on the Service and public comments received in writing and in testimony at open meetings conducted by the Steering Committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, have all been considered by the Steering Committee in preparing its final report and recommendations. The final working group reports accompany this document.

The reports of the Working Groups embody a compelling breadth and depth of understanding of the National Park Service—its problems, challenges, constraints, and opportunities. They move well beyond generalities, presenting specific, actionable recommendations that should command the attention of managers and policymakers, just as they have commanded the attention of the Steering Committee. The many individual recommendations of the Working Groups should serve as crucial points of departure for implementing reforms and initiatives spurred by the 75th Anniversary Symposium. Undoubtedly, as the director and other managers and policymakers proceed in these directions, modifications, expansions, or deletions of specific recommendations will occur. Such is the challenge as the 75th Anniversary Symposium moves from study to action. The Steering Committee's specific recommendations draw from and synthesize many of the recommendations of the Working Groups. Our highlighting of particular items does not imply rejection of others. Rather, we have directed our attention to those recommendations which establish central themes and strategies for NPS reform.

Clear and convincing mandates for action have emerged from the symposium. These mandates come together in this report as the set of six strategic objectives noted above. The strategic objectives support the underlying purposes and responsibilities of the National Park Service and the national park system. They are a pragmatic expression of our vision of the Service which should guide the implementation of reforms and initiatives. The specific recommendations put forth below are intended to advance this vision. Together, the strategic objectives and recommenda-

tions form an appropriate foundation for fundamental and durable rejuvenation and change in the National Park Service. This foundation is the Vail Agenda.

The National Parks after 75 Years: A Statement of Condition

The National Park Service has great strengths—and it has major problems. Without question, its greatest strength is its employees. For the vast majority of its employees, to work for the Service is to engage in an ever-renewing project of preserving and protecting some of the nation's and the world's most meaningful and enriching—and, often, most fragile and threatened—natural and cultural resources. Throughout the organization, the individuals who work for the Service are precisely those who are drawn to this challenge and who hold forcefully to personal stakes in the units and programs for which they are responsible. They are drawn despite a pay scale that is commonly one or two steps below that of comparably responsible and experienced employees in other sister federal agencies, and despite the common frustrations associated with bureaucracies and politics.

When individuals with this much dedication encounter roadblocks to performance, the result is a weakening of morale and effectiveness. Perceptions exist among many employees and observers—and not without bases in reality—that good job performance is impeded by lowered educational requirements and eroding professionalism; that initiative is thwarted by inadequately trained managers and politicized decision making; that the Service lacks the information and resource management/research capability it needs to be able to pursue and defend its mission and resources in Washington, D.C. and in the communities that surround the park units; that the mission and the budget of the Service is being diluted by increasing and tangential responsibilities; that there is a mismatch between the demand that the park units be protected and the tools available when the threats to park resources and values are increasingly coming from outside unit boundaries; and that communication within the Service repeatedly breaks down between field personnel and regional and headquarters management. The result of these perceptions is that the National Park Service faces significant morale and performance problems. These threaten the agency's capacity to manage and protect park re-

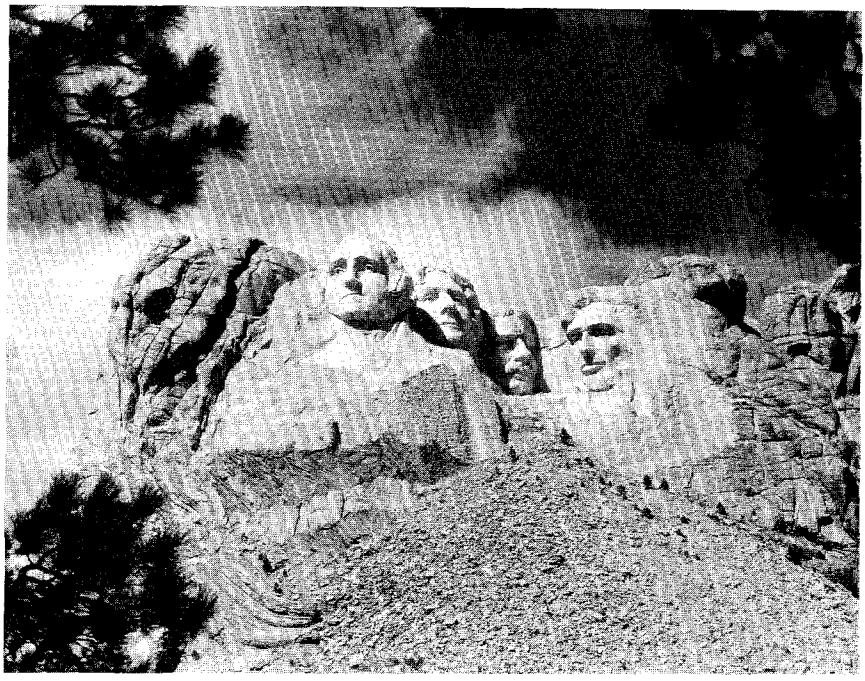
sources in the short run, and can impede the agency's future ability to attract and retain employees with the education, skills, and dedication of the current work force. Many of the recommendations of the Working Groups aim accurately at overturning the realities that underlie these perceptions.

Beyond the energy and dedication of its employees, the second great strength of the Service is the quality of the heritage and recreational resources under its management. These resources are the foundation of the broad base of public support for the Service, and they are the source of the natural inclination to look to the Service to manage new resources that might warrant protection. Notwithstanding their quality, the resources of the park system now encompass a markedly diffuse range of public values. Citizen support for and interest in individual units varies greatly, as do the contributions each unit makes to the national heritage. Requisite personnel skills, organizational structures, and management demands also vary greatly.

The 359 units of the park system are arrayed in more than twenty separate classifications which aptly describe the system's dispersion, including national battlefield, national battlefield site, national battlefield park, national historical park, national historic site, national lakeshore, national monument, national memorial, national military park, national park, national preserve, national river, wild and scenic riverway, national recreation area, national seashore, national scenic trail, international historic site, national heritage corridor, and national parkway. In addition, the National Park Service is responsible for numerous and valuable external programs of support and assistance which have impact beyond the boundaries of the national park system and even beyond the United States.

Some specific park units or programmatic responsibilities might, arguably, be better placed with other private, state, local, tribal, or federal agencies. Nevertheless, the broad range of resources and functions now managed by the National Park Service represents a permanent reality. Effective management of such a diffuse system requires the abandonment of any hope for a single, simple management philosophy. This is particularly difficult for an agency with its origins—and its identification in the public's mind—in the management and protection of the nation's most spectacular natural areas, the "crown jewels."

The symposium process elicited numerous proposals that do not and



Mount Rushmore National Memorial

should not apply to all units of the system: "The parks should be managed as environmental classrooms"; "The parks should be managed for recreation"; "The parks should be managed to teach American history." The challenge for the Service is to enunciate objectives which match the breadth of its responsibilities and alleviate intra-agency conflicts which result from the desire for a single, narrowly focused management strategy. The National Park Service manages a portfolio of assets; it must learn and implement the strategies of a portfolio manager. This means recognizing that all of the units and programs of the agency contribute to public value, but that the ways that these contributions are made and the forms that they take are varied.

The units and programs of the national park system, taken together, have an important story to tell—a story that is, at once, interesting, instructive, and inspiring. The national park system has the potential to bring together the landscapes, places, people, and events that contribute in unique ways to the shared national experience and values of an otherwise highly diverse people. Unfortunately, there is widespread concern

that the story is going untold; that, without resources, training, research, appropriate facilities and leadership, the Service is in danger of becoming merely a provider of "drive through" tourism or, perhaps, merely a traffic cop stationed at scenic, interesting, or old places.

There are multiple sources for this concern. Managing and protecting the system's natural, cultural, and recreational sites and programs are tasks for professionals—rangers, interpreters, scientists, planners, managers. The same can be said of the tasks of understanding and communicating history, or biology, or cultural significance, or archeology, or geology. Meeting these responsibilities requires education, research, and experience in specialized and technical fields. But professionals are expensive, and low grade structures have impaired the ability of the Service to attract and retain qualified personnel. They have also gradually forced the weakening of many educational standards for employment. Training budgets, meanwhile, have tended to be focused on mandated law enforcement and administrative compliance responsibilities. The problems of maintaining a professional work force are only exacerbated by perceptions that management itself faces the need to enhance its professional competency, or is subject to political interference that dilutes any bolstering sense of mission.

Additionally, as the national park system has expanded, units and programs have been added that arguably have lacked sufficient national significance to warrant National Park Service designation. Yet, such additions to the system have had sufficient constituent appeal and/or economic development benefits in selected regions to secure their inclusion in the NPS portfolio.

At the same time as new responsibilities have been added (and have attracted at least initial funding), the core operational budget of the Service has remained flat in real terms since 1983. Meanwhile, recreational visits to park units have risen sharply (25%) over the same period, reaching almost 260 million in 1990. Clearly, the capability of the Service to pursue its most central purposes of resource protection and public enjoyment is being stretched thinner and thinner. These disturbing problems are not the sole responsibility of Congress. The Service, partly through its own inaction and partly due to constraints emanating from the executive branch during the 1970s and 1980s, has lost the credibility and capability it must possess in order to play a proactive role in charting its own course, in defining and defending its core mission.

The national park system should be a source of national pride, community, and consensus. It should represent the land, the cultures, and the experiences that have defined and sustained the people of the nation in the past, and upon which we must continue to depend in the future. But, today, the ability of the National Park Service to achieve the most fundamental aspects of its mission has been compromised. There is a wide and discouraging gap between the Service's potential and its current state, and the Service has arrived at a crossroads in its history.

The basic facts and dimensions of the issues, problems, opportunities, and solutions have been articulated and defined throughout the 75th Anniversary Symposium process. An opportunity for change has been created—nothing more and nothing less. Choices must now be made and action must now be taken by those who are responsible for the future of the national park system—the director and employees of the National Park Service, the administration, Congress, and the concerned and committed public. If we fail to seize this opportunity for change, our common heritage will surely suffer.

2

The Vail Agenda

Strategic Objectives and Recommendations

Reform and rejuvenation of the National Park Service must begin with leadership that is capable of enunciating and implementing clear and compelling goals for parks policy and NPS management. But what goals? Both within the Service and outside, there exists considerable disagreement over both objectives and means of implementation: Should we promote ecological protection? Recreation? International outreach? Involvement in local out-of-park land use policy? Ease of visitor access? More in-park facilities? No in-park facilities? Aggressive marketing of historic and cultural sites? Technical assistance to private and public partners who might need our resources?

These are the kinds of questions on which reasonable people can easily disagree, particularly in a society as economically, demographically, ethnically, and culturally diverse as ours. The Steering Committee has approached the task of resolving these challenging questions by first addressing the overriding purposes of the National Park Service.

Why would a nation want a system of national parks? If we can answer this question, it will help define the purpose of the National Park Service as it looks beyond its seventy-fifth anniversary into the next century. Clearly, the units that make up the national park system of the United States are beautiful, or interesting, or fun, or restful, or invigorating, or otherwise enjoyable to those who visit them—but such wants can be, and are, satisfied through numerous other public and private sources.

What rightfully distinguishes the National Park Service from other providers of aesthetic, cultural, recreational, environmental, and historical experiences and makes it the appropriate focus of a unique status and management philosophy?

The answer lies in the link between the units of the national park system and those traits of environment, wilderness, landscape, history, and culture that bind Americans together as a distinct people. The units of the national park system should constitute the sights, the scenery, the environments, the people, the places, the events, the conflicts that have contributed elements of shared national experience, values, and identity to build a national character out of the diversity from which we come.

We may disagree among ourselves as to the worth of the consequences of Columbus's landing in the Western Hemisphere, but we can not seriously deny that his landing shaped life and even landscape in the United States. We can debate the larger issues surrounding Anglo-American expansion that Custer's battlefield at Crow Agency symbolizes, but we cannot deny that it symbolizes a defining time in American history. We can argue whether it is ecologically sound to fight fires in Yellowstone National Park, but we can not fail to see that the very disagreement is an expression of values that we place in what we call "natural" environments. It is the ability of unique places, landscapes, environments, events, and people to become part of the national character that constitutes "national significance" and warrants protection within the national park system.

The resources protected by the national park system harbor lessons that the nation wishes and needs to teach itself and replenish in itself, again and again, visitor after visitor. Thus, just as it is the responsibility of the system to protect and nurture resources of significance to the nation, so must it also convey the meanings of those resources and their contributions to the nation and to the public in a continuing process of building the national community.

It is the nature of park resources that their meanings can and should be conveyed in a multitude of ways. For some units, this may occur through acts of restive or active recreation, experiencing the link between park resources and elements of the national identity in ways that words and pictures can not adequately impart. A hike in Glacier National Park arguably conveys our heritage of western wildness better than the necessary lecture on the need for bear bells or any other preparatory introduc-

tions. For some park resources, on-site interpretative oral, visual, and/or written communication may be appropriate and necessary. How else to convey to the public the intricate ecology of Everglades National Park or the link between Fort McHenry and all that has followed its period of brief excitement, or Ellis Island and its indelible print on our diverse people? Across the units of the park system, the methods may vary, but the responsibility to tell each unit's story is inseparable from the reasons we protect that story.

The ability of our national historic sites, cultural symbols, and natural environments to contribute to the public's sense of a shared national identity is at the core of the purpose of the National Park Service. The vision of the Service that necessarily follows is one in which the agency's purpose is to preserve, protect, and convey the meaning of those natural, cultural, and historical resources that contribute significantly to the nation's values, character, and experience. To fully meet the challenge of this vision in the coming decades, the National Park Service will need uncommon clarity in its policies and compelling leadership in its management. The Steering Committee believes that the Service should be guided in these directions by key strategic objectives that can direct the agency's planning for the future. We have identified six such objectives as paramount.

Strategic Objective 1: Resource Stewardship and Protection

The primary responsibility of the National Park Service must be protection of park resources from internal and external impairment.

It is in the nature of the kinds of resources that a nation would want to embrace with a national park system that those resources can be irreparably altered and degraded. Without proper stewardship and protection, historic battlefields can be converted to the landscapes of suburbia, the structures and objects that carry the memory of inspiring individuals can be obliterated by decay, and the beauty and ecologies of unique natural areas can be irrevocably scarred. The nation's need for the contributions that resources of these kinds can make to our heritage is not a temporary need. The value of natural and cultural resources that convey important dimensions of the national experience and character does not wane with time; today's national character is the parent of tomorrow's. An effective National Park Service must ensure continuity and sustain-

Adams National Historic Site

ability in the public's access to park values. Failure to achieve this goal would constitute a fundamental breach of the public trust; without protection of park resources, other park values such as education, enjoyment, and recreation cannot be sustained.

The mission of preserving and protecting the national treasures that belong in the national park system can only be met if the Service can confront the threats to park resources and has the means of dealing with those threats. The evolving economics and demographics of the United States are driving economic, social, and ecological changes in the regions

outside unit boundaries. These changes often can impair park resources. Many formerly remote natural area parks, for example, are seeing increasing suburbanization around their boundaries—often spurred by state and local governments anxious to capitalize on tourism-led regional growth. Similarly, many cultural and historic sites in and near urban areas are fighting to maintain the quality of their park units as their neighborhoods struggle with severe economic and social problems.

Thus, although there is ambivalence and uncertainty among park personnel, the mandate of resource protection means that the prevention of external and transboundary impairment of park resources and their attendant values should be a central objective of park system policy. Giving force to such a goal will require policies which recognize that:

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should provide technical and planning assistance to public and private parties able to mitigate external and transboundary threats to park unit resources, and to those able to influence the quality of visitor enjoyment and enlightenment through their provision of gateway services.
>
> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should utilize available resources, expertise, and cooperative relationships to ensure compliance with applicable law when external activities otherwise endanger park resources.

Rising concern about externally generated degradation is motivated by rapid change in the areas around and near many parks. The currency of this concern, however, should not be taken to mean that protection of resources inside park units has become a secondary concern. The mandate of resource protection for the benefit of present and future citizens must be upheld. Doing so, of course, is not easy. There is an inherent tension that surrounds the management of park resources. On the one hand, it is appropriate that the public be provided with access to park units so that park values may be enjoyed and their meaning to the nation may be conveyed. On the other hand, without proper management, public access can degrade park resources such that the very values that public access is intended to provide cannot be perpetuated.

The contributions that the park units and programs make to the nation's character take many different forms, as do the appropriate means of conveying those contributions through the enjoyment and education of visitors. The visitor activities appropriate at one site may be wholly in-

compatible with the park values of another site. Thus, there is no simple and universally applicable rule for managing the tension between visitor use and enjoyment and the mandate of perpetual protection. What can be said is that the resources and values that constitute each park unit's contributions to the national park system should stand at the center of parks policy. We conclude that:

> *Recommendation* Each park unit should be managed to protect unimpaired the special resources and values that constitute its contribution to the national identity and experience. Such values may include a unit's unique historic significance, cultural lessons, wilderness traits, recreational opportunities, and/or ecological systems.

> *Recommendation* Natural resources in the park system should be managed under ecological principles that prevent their impairment. Cultural diversity and social and historical contexts should be recognized as significant values in the protection and stewardship of historical and cultural resources.

The "park values" that carry significance to the public and that are referred to in Strategic Objective 1 do not all lie within the national park system. Municipal, county, state, tribal, federal, and even private agents are entrusted with the protection of park values that contribute to the fabric of the nation. On the basis of its experience and capacity, the National Park Service is especially well suited to assist these parties, even when full inclusion of a particular site into the national park system is impractical or inappropriate. In fact, as the United States becomes increasingly global in its focus and outlook, the National Park Service has an important international role to play in preserving, protecting, and conveying the meaning of park resources.

Thus, recognizing that the Service is not alone in its concern for the preservation of natural and cultural resources:

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should seek active public and private partners engaged in resource protection, research, education, and visitor enjoyment that are consistent with the objectives of protecting park values and conveying their meaning to the public.

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should reinforce its role as a world leader in park affairs through agreements

and actions which facilitate the exchange of information, development of environmental and cultural resource preservation strategies, and protection of critical world resources.

Recommendation Programs, such as an American Heritage Area program, should be established to preserve and protect natural, cultural, and historical resources that are worthy of national recognition, but that do not meet the requirements necessary for full inclusion in the national park system. Such programs should make use of public and private sector partnerships, technical assistance, and NPS support.

Recommendation The National Park Service should fully implement, and be provided requisite funding for, existing legislative mandates under Public Law 88-29, requiring the Department of Interior to produce at five-year intervals a nationwide recreation plan; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act; the Urban Parks and Recreation Resources Act; The Historic Preservation Fund Act, and related statutes.

The last of these recommendations reflects the need to close the gap between potential and performance. Under the stateside portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, for example, the National Park Service has responsibilities for much-needed assistance to state and local governments. Yet, such responsibilities have been permitted to lapse over recent years. Fulfilling the promise of a significant role for the Service in supporting and assisting other resource agencies will require two primary changes in the status quo: adequate federal funding and aggressive leadership from the Service. If the Service is not determined to provide the necessary leadership, these external functions should be transferred to other agencies. Certainly, to allow such functions to languish—due to either a lack of leadership or inadequate funding—is to ignore the public's interest that underlies the legislation mandating an important external role for the Service.

Strategic Objective 2: Access and Enjoyment

Each park unit should be managed to provide the nation's diverse public with access to and recreational and educational enjoyment of the lessons contained in that unit, while maintaining unimpaired those unique attributes that are its contribution to the national park system.

The emphasis in the first strategic objective on protection of park resources should not be construed to mean that park units should be managed as fortresses, impregnable from the outside and off-limits to the public. After all, the units of the park system are properly included in that system when they possess important values that should be conveyed to the public. The national park units exist for the enjoyment, recreation, and enlightenment of the present and future public. Public exposure to and experience in the park units allows them to convey their significance and place in the fabric of the nation.

While public access and enjoyment are essential elements of the purpose of the park system, it should not be the goal of the National Park Service to provide visitors with mere entertainment and recreation. Rather, the objective should be to provide the public with enjoyment and enlightenment attendant to those park attributes that constitute each unit's special meaning and contribution to the national character. This is use and enjoyment on the *park's* terms. It is entertainment, education, and recreation *with meaning.*

The National Park Service should not, for example, just provide access to scenery. It should provide access to scenery in a manner that provokes the sentiments of wonder and good fortune, as well as the sense that there is a tapestry of such sights woven together into America (and, increasingly, Earth) the Beautiful. The evidence of our popular culture, with its ubiquitous videographic and photographic images, confirms the ability of the layered geology of the Grand Canyon or the stoicism of Canyon de Chelley or the majesty of Yosemite Valley or the serenity of Acadia's coves to define a portion of Americans' conception of their nation and environment in this way. Similarly, the National Park Service does not just preserve threatened ecological niches; other agencies and laws can and do address such problems. The Service should and does protect ecological systems in ways that allow the public to learn from and see their values at work, from the grizzlies of Denali National Park and Preserve to the flora of Saguaro National Monument.

Similarly, the national park system should not merely report events that happened here or there. Its historic sites and resources should provide the experiences of history that symbolize and teach about the issues and values that have shaped the nation's course. Is there any doubt that the textile mills of Lowell or the bell tower at Independence Hall or the graves at Gettysburg represent defining events and times in the shaping of

the country and her people? By the same standard, the National Park Service should not simply preserve interesting cultural artifacts. It should provide exposure and insight into the cultures that directly and indirectly give us individual and shared identity, from Longfellow's house to Martin Luther King's home to the mall in Washington, D.C.

In short, the resources in the national park system are not just scenic; they are not just old and interesting; they are not merely memorable. Nor is the Service appropriately just an energetic guardian or pleasant tour guide. There is meaning in these sites, these ecosystems, these historic events, these people and their culture. The meaning should come from each park's special, nationally significant qualities.

Stated in this way, the Service really is a portfolio manager. Every unit does not have to be managed in precisely the same way; activities that are incompatible with one park's unique and properly protected qualities may not be so at another unit. Rafting and canoeing concessions may be wholly incompatible with protection of the unique wildlife of Katmai National Park and Preserve, but consistent with visitor enjoyment and the national heritage qualities of Grand Teton National Park. A snack bar or restaurant may degrade the tranquility necessary for conveying the history in Jefferson's memorial, but enhance the quality of visitor experience at Gateway National Recreation Area. The Service appropriately provides a portfolio of park and wilderness experiences and values to the public, but the portfolio is united by a single objective: contribution to a shared national character.

The Steering Committee recognizes that providing for public access and public enjoyment and enlightenment, on the one hand, and protecting park resources and values, on the other, often come into conflict. Visitors to park units use park resources: they take up space, they require transportation, food, (often) shelter, waste facilities, traffic control, viewing areas, and so on. Limitations on access and use are appropriate where they threaten impairment of a unit's special qualities, and where they significantly threaten the quality of overall visitor experience (through, for example, crowding or mutually disturbing recreational activities). Accordingly,

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should minimize the development of facilities within park boundaries to the extent consistent with the mission of conveying each individual park unit's significance to the public.

Recommendation Where wilderness values are present, impairment of those values should not be compromised.

Recommendation The repair and maintenance of existing park facilities should be undertaken and designed to fulfill the purpose of conveying park values to the public, while protecting the special qualities of each park unit.

Recommendation Facilities that are purely for the convenience of visitors should be provided by the private sector in gateway communities.

Strategic Objective 3: Education and Interpretation

It should be the responsibility of the National Park Service to interpret and convey each park unit's and the park system's contributions to the nation's values, character, and experience.

Access to the special qualities and story of each park does not mean solely, or even necessarily, simple personal visitation. "Just showing up" is likely to be insufficient to derive full enjoyment and enlightenment from the unique resources that each park offers. Conveying the meaning—the contribution to national identity—of each unit's resources will generally require aggressive efforts in education and interpretation by the National Park Service. Even in the case of wilderness, where the special qualities of the park might entail their expression through contemplative experience, a diverse and often unprepared public may require varying degrees of introduction to park values. More generally, access to the meaning of the public assets contained in each park unit can and should be provided through a wide range of on-site and off-site strategies: "front country" facilities, professional interpreters, interpretation by other service employees and concessionaires, written and visual materials, educational outreach to area schools, research opportunities for interested professionals. The challenge is to match the method of communication with the needs and perspectives of the diverse segments of the public.

Unfortunately, the Service commitment, and ability to commit, to a mission of proactive education and interpretation as a high priority has waxed and waned. Educational outreach is rare and not systemic, depending on the admirable initiatives of individual superintendents, rangers, and interpreters. Interpretation, meanwhile, is seen by the work force as having often been assigned a low-level priority with a "minimum is enough"

The National Mall

standard. In part, this reflects thinning and instability in funding and the channeling of budgets into other mandated responsibilities and functions; in part, it reflects ambivalence about encouraging visitation; in part, it reflects a lack of statutory language supporting education and interpretation as core objectives of the park system.

This situation should be remedied. As the vision of the Service that we have expressed above indicates, conveying the meaning of park resources to the nation's public should be seen as a central reason for having a national park system in the first place. Through internal efforts and legislative support, the National Park Service should formalize and pursue a commitment to education and interpretation. Numerous recommendations of the Working Groups speak to this task. It is particularly important that:

> *Recommendation* Each visitor to a park unit should have access to a basic interpretation of the unit's unique features and sig-

nificance. The National Park Service should invest in innovative expansions of its ability to provide interpretation that enhances visitor enjoyment and enlightenment.

Recommendation The National Park Service should launch a specific program of educational outreach, directed at schools and community groups and designed to maximize the public's access to the unique ecological, historical, cultural, and geologic lessons contained in the park system.

If the Service is to fulfill the objectives of education and interpretation, it must invest in understanding the resources it protects and the constituencies that it serves. The Steering Committee has been struck by the paucity and, certainly, the unevenness of the knowledge that the Service has and/or is able to use on these fronts. Without information on such matters as the kinds of activities that most threaten unique park resources, or the perspectives from which visitors see and experience park resources, decisions on use, access, interpretation media, and necessary facilities will lack authority, credibility, and value to the public. Nor can the public's interests in the national park system be well-served. Thus, we conclude that:

Recommendation The National Park Service should embark upon a systematic, park-by-park, usable inventory of information on park resources and visitor needs.

Recommendation Comprehensive information on park unit resources and public needs, acquired by resource professionals and solicited from citizens, should be incorporated directly into the management of park units and other agency programs which serve the public.

Strategic Objective 4: Proactive Leadership

The National Park Service must be a leader in local, national, and international park affairs, actively pursuing the mission of the national park system and assisting others in managing their park resources and values.

The strategic objectives that we have set forth for national park system policy require that the National Park Service possess personnel and organizational structures that are up to the implied and explicit tasks. As we have stressed, however, the National Park Service faces some severe

challenges—budgetary constraints, eroding professionalism, a cadre of senior managers nearing retirement, inheritance and imposition of inappropriate new units, inadequate training and employment standards. What can the Service do at a time when its problems seem so pervasive? While there are no panaceas, the Service should strive for continuous improvement. It is the view of the Steering Committee that progress must start with adoption of strategic management objectives that adequately confront the problems at hand and leadership throughout the system that is capable of implementing those objectives.

Throughout the symposium process, the Steering Committee has heard variations on a repetitive theme: The National Park Service has lost the ability to exercise leadership in determining the fate of the resources and programs it manages. At the level of the overall system, the Service is variously seen as run and overrun by Congress, the White House, the secretary of the interior, private interest groups, or public interest groups. At the park unit and regional level, similar perceptions pervade the view of the Service: it is purely reactive to external pressures; it is uncertain as to its role vis-à-vis other federal, tribal, state, and local authorities; it is not armed with the resources, legal authorities, or information needed to confront external impacts; its personnel lack experience and training to deal with public pressure and the necessity of securing public support for park initiatives; its management budgets are channeled into special projects and excessive administrative layers divorced from core functions of the park units and other agency programs.

While individual assertions of these types often tend to be overstated and reflect the observer's particular standpoint, the Steering Committee concurs with the general diagnosis. An effective agency knows its problems and prospects, and has the capacity to frame and participate fully in debates over its policies, budgets, powers, and future directions. The National Park Service urgently needs to improve its capacities in these areas.

At the system level, the National Park Service deals most directly with Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Personnel Management, and other resource agencies inside and outside the Department of the Interior. It also deals with interest groups, public and private, each typically trying to sway the direction of park system policy. With its strong asset base of park units and its foundation of public sup-

port, the Service potentially brings a great deal to the table. What has been missing? The symposium process has indicated several answers and attendant recommendations that we endorse.

The first concerns focus on organizational functions. As a number of the Working Groups and many symposium participants concluded:

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should establish a headquarters Office of Legislative and Policy Analysis, and reestablish within this office a corresponding legislative program.
>
> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should establish an Office of Strategic Planning, charged with documenting impediments to the mission of the National Park Service, generating feasible solutions and funding requirements, and communicating these to the director and the Office of Legislative and Policy Analysis.
>
> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should reestablish an areas study program, covering both natural and heritage resources and charged with initiating and responding to proposals for park system additions. This program could be based within the Office of Strategic Planning.

We note favorably that the director has already undertaken the second of these recommendations and is proceeding with the third. These recommendations are directed at allowing the Service to do the quality analysis and produce the critical studies through which it can assert leadership in the pursuit of its mission. It is the nature of the public policy process that such leadership requires an agency such as the Service to arm itself with argument and information when it wishes to stand up for its interests. The Service must be able to produce and communicate quickly the credible written study or the in-depth oral testimony, founded on hard analysis and sound data, when its interests are at stake. Such information and capabilities are valuable every time there is a need to initiate policy or agency reform, or when matters affecting its mission, its personnel, or its organization arise in Congress, elsewhere in the administration, and/or from the public.

Throughout government, this capacity for substantive engagement in the policy arena distinguishes organizations that have a strong voice in determining their fates from those that are at the mercy of policy partici-

pants who are better prepared and armed with persuasive arguments and information. Without the longer and shorter term capabilities sought in the creation of offices of strategic planning and legislative and policy analysis, respectively, the Service will continue to find it difficult to make its case with those it must deal with in our democratic structure.

The third of the above recommendations, urging the reinstatement of a new areas study program, is aimed at directly addressing the issues of appropriate and inappropriate additions to the system. As noted, inappropriate additions drain resources away from core, mission-building activities and commitments. A new areas study program would allow the Service to systematically assess and prioritize system additions in light of the criteria of its mission. In so doing, the Service would acquire the information, expertise, and experience needed to aggressively undertake and justify appropriate additions, and to respond constructively to proposals for additions emanating from outside parties.

Leadership in pursuit of the mission of the National Park Service is also a compelling need at the level of the individual park units and their regional offices. With the importance of external and transboundary activities as potential sources of degradation of park unit values, "proactive leadership" means that NPS officials must take responsibility for protecting park units from externally originating degradation. The symposium process has generated a number of detailed and feasible recommendations for achieving this. We note in particular that:

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should clarify existing legislative and regulatory authorities for addressing external and transboundary resource threats, ensure their use, and seek additional legislative authority where needed.
>
> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should initiate an intensive training program for managers to explain authorities, mechanisms, and strategies for addressing external and transboundary issues, and to help managers view the natural, cultural, and historical contexts of their units.

Both internally and externally, the Service needs to recognize that public institutions exist to produce public value, much as private institutions generate private value. In the case of the Service, virtually all of its value-creating activities are centered in the individual park units and programs. Yet today, nearly one-third of all Service employees (including all

twenty-one senior executives) work outside the structure of the park units. This is not inherently a shortcoming so long as regional and national management are not diverted from core responsibilities of creating public value. Guarding against such diversion, however, is problematic. To address this:

> *Recommendation* The management and resources of the National Park Service should be focused to maximize educational, recreational, and cultural value in the park units and other agency programs which serve the public.

This recommendation implies strong decentralized management able to support the adherence to such a key focus. The decentralized organizational structure of the Service is not now functioning with full effectiveness. It lacks a strong, shared sense of mission. This results in inconsistency in its ability to communicate and carry out decentralized management objectives. Inadequate training and familiarity with the structure and concepts underlying the Service's decentralized organization erode accountability. Thus,

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should assess its capabilities for decentralized management. Effective decentralized organization will require: functions of support and service to the parks, liaison with non-Service parties, systems of accountability and control, training in management principles, and broader grants of authority to superintendents and staff in line operations.

Strategic Objective 5: Science and Research

The National Park Service must engage in a sustained and integrated program of natural, cultural, and social science resource management and research aimed at acquiring and using the information needed to manage and protect park resources.

Considering the very wide array of responsibilities that the National Park Service bears, information has never been more critical. This includes information from the life and earth sciences on ecological processes, from the social sciences on the public's needs and capabilities, from the historical sciences on the facts and meanings of events, people, and places, from the arts on landscapes and architecture, from educators and communicators on interpretation methods, and from managerial science on the performance of public agencies. In light of these needs and

the apparent natural home of scientific resource management and research in the nation's premier resource protection agency, the National Park Service is extraordinarily deficient in its capacities to generate, acquire, synthesize, act upon, and articulate to the public sound research and scientific information.

Unlike many other resource management agencies, the Service lacks specific legislative mandates supporting a systemwide commitment to science and an integrated program of resource management and research. Currently, resource management and research tend to operate separately rather than as an integrated program. Because resource management programs lack a broad base of subject-matter specialists and adequate base funding, research efforts are often redirected toward resource management needs, potentially weakening both programs. Research efforts also tend to be driven by immediate and narrow needs that are defined by particularized tasks, such as compilation of environmental compliance documents, monitoring and evaluation of an instance of program initiation in interpretation or recreation management, or collection of information pertaining to a pending resource decision. Managers, in turn, have little training and experience by which to learn the uses and needs of research professionals and their output. Funding for such employees and their efforts has been unstable in level and direction.

Under these circumstances, the use of science and research in the National Park Service often has lacked independence and the broader peer review that presses researchers to remain up to date and pathbreaking. Research and research professionals have been tilted toward problem-solving and internal and external consulting. This has come at the expense of more basic and long-term scientific contributions to the Service's and society's understanding of natural and cultural resources, and their management. In fact, it is in precisely these dimensions that the Service has the greatest potential to contribute to resource management and protection worldwide. As we look to the future, science and research should form the foundation from which the National Park Service asserts itself as an *international* leader. Putting itself in the forefront of park affairs both domestically and internationally would not only improve the quality of the nation's and the world's park systems, it would also contribute substantially to the morale of a work force seeking a reinvigorated sense of leadership and commitment to quality.

Several of the Working Group reports and many of the contributors

to the 75th Anniversary Symposium have recommended ways in which this objective might be converted into reality. The Steering Committee believes that any significant progress in this regard will require, at least, that the National Park Service:

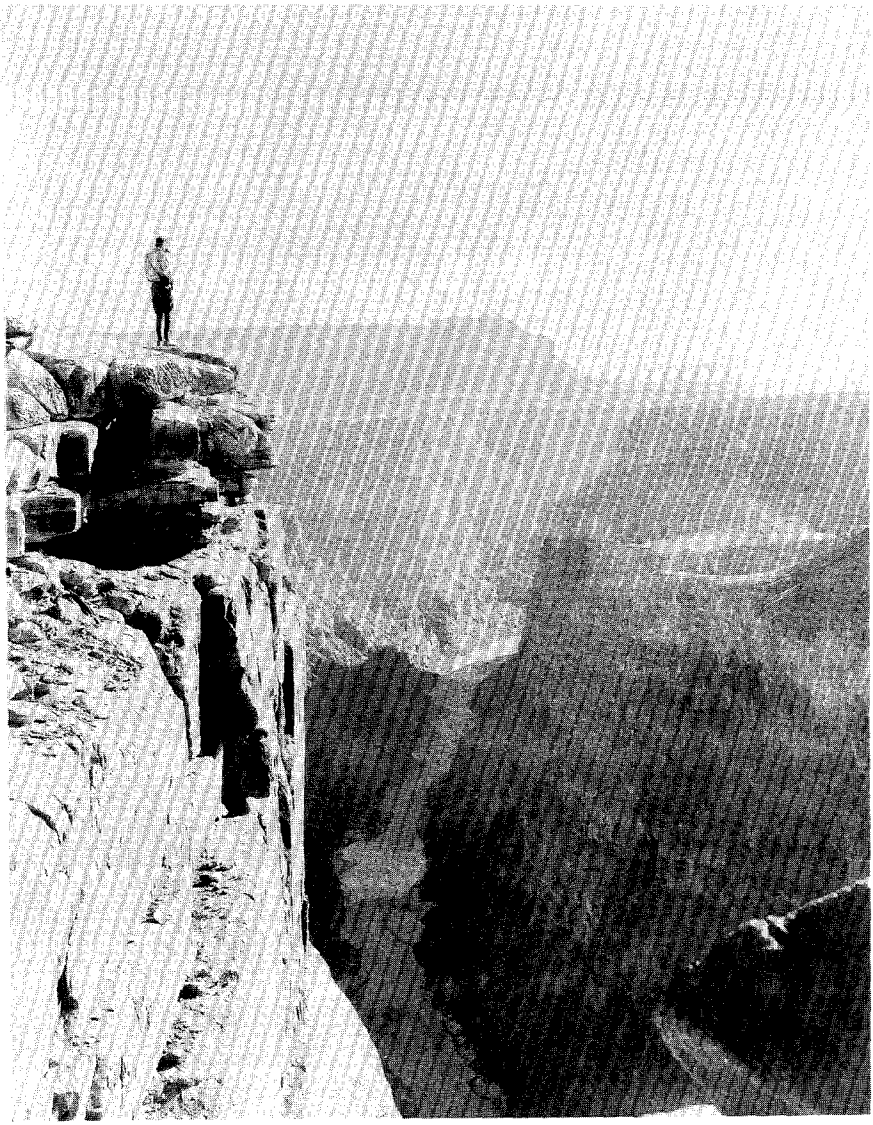
> *Recommendation* Secure legislation and funding that support a research mandate for the National Park Service.
>
> *Recommendation* Accelerate the training of NPS managers in information management and the role, use, and production of research information.
>
> *Recommendation* Base resource protection, access, and interpretation decisions and programs on full consideration of the best available scientific research; where quality information is lacking, initiate it through NPS resource management professionals.

Strategic Objective 6: Professionalism

The National Park Service must create and maintain a highly professional organization and work force.

Much has been said here and throughout the symposium process about the employees of the National Park Service. To some extent, they are a paradox. At all levels, they are striking in their commitment; yet, they confront an organization that repeatedly frustrates their development, professionalism, and initiative. This paradox can not persist. The National Park Service must be able to tap and fuel the talents and energy of its work force, or it will decline into mediocrity.

The term *professionalism* appropriately describes what is needed of the work force and organization that manages the national park system. As we have stressed, the National Park Service is not properly seen as a mere supporter of recreational, aesthetic, or cultural tourism; nor is it a safety vault for inattentive storage. The work force and organization of the Service must be equal to the task of protecting park resources and maintaining the infrastructure necessary to ensure that their significance can be conveyed to each succeeding generation of citizens. The employees of the agency that is up to this task must be professional: personally and institutionally responsible, well-trained, self-starting, innovative, energetic, insightful. The challenge of the National Park Service is to be the kind of institution that can call forth and sustain these traits.



Grand Canyon National Park

The participants in the 75th Anniversary Symposium—NPS employees and outside observers alike—offered a great many insights into the difficulties that the agency is facing in living up to this challenge. They range from problems of pay and stature to lack of advancement opportunities and declining employment standards, from communications

breakdowns between and within levels of management to inadequate training, from politicized assignments to excessive tolerance of poor performers, from poor financial controls to mismatches between responsibility and a decentralized organization with strained systems of accountability. These and many other diagnoses are unquestionably true, with varying degrees of severity in their consequences for performance, at various places and various times. In fact, these kinds of problems plague many agencies and organizations. Where should the Service begin if it is to make progress on productive reform?

The Steering Committee sees opportunity for significant progress on at least four primary fronts: employment standards, training, pay grades, and management of job assignments and career advancement. Employment standards, for example, assist an organization in acquiring the appropriate personnel inputs that are the foundations of its capabilities. For an agency such as the National Park Service, the capabilities it requires imply a premium on specialists able to fulfill functions ranging from law enforcement and wildlife management to financial systems analysis and historical interpretation. At the same time, the agency is in the business of delivering meaningful services—education, recreation, environmental protection—to the public; and its work force must be attuned to generating value for the public it serves. To meet these personnel needs:

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should establish and/or raise educational requirements as appropriate for professional track positions, including those that require strong bases of technical, scientific, interpretive, administrative, and/or managerial knowledge.

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should strengthen recruitment, hiring, and retention of a culturally diverse professional work force.

Systematic and comprehensive training of NPS personnel must become one of the agency's central functions. Ongoing efforts to upgrade and tailor employees' knowledge and skills serve not only to meet the Service's technical and managerial needs. Such training efforts also play central roles in creating opportunities for and expectations of career advancement to positions of increasing responsibility and leadership—advancement that is crucial to both the Service's performance and the personal satisfaction of its employees.

Training commitments that can serve these ends cannot be perfunctory. They must be aimed at furthering the mission of the Service, providing in-depth education and skills acquisition, identifying emerging leaders, and assisting mid-level and senior personnel in the commonly experienced transition from technical support functions to management responsibility. The techniques for achieving these training objectives must also be matched to the tasks at hand, making use of internal and external programs and program professionals, and emphasizing the linkages between employees and the purposes, traditions, and organization of the Service. The range of possible options for training includes intensive academy-based programs for mid-level and emerging leaders, senior executive education venues, strong orientation programs at the entry level, and internal and external internship assignments. To lay the groundwork for improved professional training:

> *Recommendation* The National Park Service should implement a comprehensive program of broad-based, mission-driven employee training.
>
> *Recommendation* All NPS employees should receive basic orientation training that covers the agency's objectives, purpose, history, and organization.
>
> *Recommendation* National Park Service training should focus on development of present and future management and leadership capabilities, as well as appropriate professional and technical skills.

While training efforts will be helpful, the challenge of sustaining career satisfaction in the Service will require more. If the Service is to be able to compete for the talented specialists and professionals that it needs, NPS compensation structures (broadly conceived to include salaries and benefits, as well as the work environment and expectations) must be maintained at levels commensurate with those available in comparable agencies and organizations. Career advancement, in turn, must be merit-based and must be able to match capabilities to tasks—a daunting managerial challenge in an agency as complex and decentralized as the National Park Service. To foster fulfillment of these goals:

> *Recommendation* Working with the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget, the National Park Service should undertake a comprehensive review of its existing compensation structure. This review should be

conducted under needs criteria derived from the mission of the Service and in light of professional compensation structures in related resource agencies.

Recommendation The National Park Service should create a Human Resources Management Board with responsibility for senior management assignment, training and development, and for developing the agency's plans for training, career advancement procedures, and educational requirements.

We believe these recommendations will enhance the ability of the Service to attract and retain high-quality employees, train employees in ways that enhance their ability to serve the Service's unique mission, and allow them to perceive clear career paths that reward performance. A large number of the Working Groups' recommendations expand usefully on those stressed here. Reform which enhances the professionalism of the work force should be an immediate and high priority as the symposium process turns toward implementation of recommendations.

From Recommendations to Progress

The National Park Service is a large, complex, and geographically dispersed agency with strong traditions in both its policies and its management styles. It will not be transformed quickly or easily. Implementation of the change and reform called for in this report will require initiatives that go to the core of NPS policy and management. Responsibility for these initiatives does not rest solely with the current director of the National Park Service, or even with current congressional and administration policymakers. Charting and staying a new course for the Service will require commitment, action, and leadership which extends well into the last quarter of the Service's first century. Moreover, many of the recommendations that we have made will require legislative action by Congress and the backing of agencies, officials, and other interested parties outside the Service—from the secretary of the interior to citizen supporters of the park system. And, the Steering Committee is under no delusion that the kinds of fundamental reforms and recommendations that have come out of the 75th Anniversary Symposium are free of budgetary consequences.

None of these considerations should delay the director in launching and empowering an effort to pursue implementation of the recommenda-

tions we have made. Indeed, the first steps in this direction took place at the Vail Symposium with the forceful commitments to action of both the director and the secretary of the interior. An implementation task force has been initiated under the lead of the deputy director of the Service, structural reforms such as the creation of an Office of Strategic Planning and an American Heritage Areas program are being put in place, and even budgetary progress is evident. Equally important are the commitments to action of the National Park Service employees who have participated in the symposium process. The Steering Committee, too, stands ready to assist the Service in addressing the forthcoming phase of the symposium process. The challenge now is to take this process from analysis and proposal to decision and implementation.

Meeting the Funding Needs of the National Park System

This report describes a vision of the National Park Service, embodied in the six strategic objectives, as an assertive, fully capable agency with the ability to manage the national park system and ensure its protection for future generations. If these strategic objectives are the pillars of NPS policy and management, adequate funding must be the base of the pillars. There is a cost to ensuring the ongoing protection of America's heritage.

The Steering Committee believes that adequate funding for the National Park Service should continue to be a federal responsibility, and that Congress is the appropriate source of funding for the operation and management of the system. Public/private partnerships are a valuable tool for maintaining a margin of excellence in park system programs and for funding special projects of the Service or the park units. Reliance on private funding sources for core functions, however, risks dependency and dilution of the National Park Service's ability to pursue its central purposes. In addition, outside funding can be particularly unstable and insufficient to address core problems.

The National Park Service contributes to the common good. It protects continuing public access to and enjoyment of the resources which symbolize and contribute to our national character and heritage. As such, the national park system is an important part of America's infrastructure. Like our system of highways, which stretches from shore to shore connecting people and communities, and like the country's bridges, which span vast canyons and waterways, the national park system ties to-

gether the separate elements of environment, history, and culture which help to make one nation of the American people. This infrastructure that is the park system has been steadfastly supported by the American people for many decades. It should not now be allowed to deteriorate.

Substantial collective investments have been made to build and to perpetuate national park system units and programs. Protection of the value of America's investment in its heritage requires realistic expenditures now and in the future. Unfortunately, funding necessary for this protection has been neglected and deferred in the past. Simultaneously, a number of new, costly, and sometimes ill-conceived responsibilities have been added to the Service's charge. To bring focus and discipline back to the funding of the National Park Service, the Steering Committee recommends:

> *Recommendation* The units and programs of the national park system should be viewed as critical components of the nation's infrastructure. Congressional funding of the National Park Service must be fully adequate to meet the responsibilities of maintaining and enhancing this infrastructure.

While Congress must appropriate the basic funding of the National Park Service, it is the professional responsibility of the Service to correctly and completely articulate the magnitude of the system's financial needs as well as the consequences of underfunding. The administration, the Congress, and the American public must be fully informed in order to make decisions which reflect the nation's priorities.

To meet its budgetary responsibilities, the National Park Service should couple its efforts at implementing the recommendations from the 75th Anniversary Symposium with a formal and comprehensive review of the full range of possible funding options. This range is potentially broad. In addition to regular congressional appropriations, several other options warrant serious consideration. These include: a modest gasoline tax increase with revenues earmarked for the national park system; returns from concessions and extractive operations that are consistent with the value of access to the public's park resources; small levies on activities and equipment related to park system use (modeled after the successful Pittman/Robertson and Wallop/Breaux fees); voluntary contributions through income tax "check-offs"; sale of commemorative tokens; and creation of an America the Beautiful Pass for visitors and donors. The review of funding

options should be a major early task of the Office of Strategic Planning. At the very least,

> *Recommendation* Funding under programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act should be provided to the National Park Service to the full extent authorized.

Such funding would substantially increase the ability of the Service to fulfill important external program responsibilities by which it is able to provide support and assistance to non-Service parties engaged in the management of heritage resources. Also,

> *Recommendation* The policy of returning 50 percent of visitor fees to park units should be reaffirmed and implemented.

This policy is consistent with both the decentralized management structure of the National Park Service and the associated need to locate control and incentives where decisions are actually made.

Judicious reliance on user charges and visitor fees is not inconsistent with the public purposes of the park system. User fees are appropriate as means of recovering the (typically) minor direct costs of visitor entry and use and offsetting the costs of providing specialized uses with primarily private benefits (such as rafting or rock climbing). Reliance on user fees, however, should not mean viewing the hundreds of millions of park system visitors as "the paying public" to which park units are marketed. As part of the country's infrastructure, the units and programs of the National Park Service should not base access on the principle of ability to pay. This is especially true in light of the economic, demographic, and cultural diversity of the public that the national park system properly reaches.

Whatever the range and level of funding sources available to the National Park Service, the Service must improve its financial management and planning capabilities. This element of professionalism should rightfully be expected, and highlights further the importance of the symposium recommendations concerning the training and personnel policies of the Service.

Planning for Implementation

The commitments that the director of the National Park Service and the secretary of the interior have made to carrying the 75th Anniversary

Symposium through to real change must be complemented by concrete planning and organizational commitments. Within the Service, communication and involvement of the employees is crucial. Employees must be committed to a team effort and must clearly understand the objectives of reform in order to implement their components of systemic change. Senior management, including regional directors and senior executives, in particular, must be given responsibility for the tasks of communication and leadership. Failure to involve these individuals intimately in the process of reform risks derailing the process before it can get underway.

The Steering Committee urges the director to explicitly engage National Park Service managers in setting the course of change, and to empower them to take the steps that are needed for success. The director should also ensure that the implementation effort is provided with adequate employee and financial resources to do the job at hand. Such decisions will clearly indicate the depth of the *agency's* commitment, as well as the institutional support for proactive leadership within the Service.

Any serious effort to implement the Vail Agenda must include mechanisms for tracking, assessing, and ensuring progress. Working with the Office of Strategic Planning, the implementation team should produce as soon as possible a realistic prioritization of its tasks and work plans designed to ensure the fulfillment of those tasks. The Steering Committee is prepared to provide an independent sounding board in these efforts. In addition, in order to keep its external constituencies apprised of its progress:

> *Recommendation* Within twenty-four months, the National Park Service should issue a comprehensive report on the "State of the National Park Service," assessing the progress and prospects for meeting the strategic objectives of the agency.

As it moves forward with the Vail Agenda, the National Park Service has an opportunity to involve an impressive array of capable partners for change—from citizen advocates to senior administration officials, from sister agencies to organized interest organizations. A common thread has run through the symposium process: Americans care about the national park system and its programs. Do not hesitate to call upon them. The Service's external constituents have much to contribute. They can help to define the "feasible," identify overlooked options, exert influence in various quarters to keep reforms on track, and improve the two-way commu-

nication that the symposium process has fostered so successfully. It will be particularly important that the National Park Service take the lead in forging stronger relationships with such organizations as the relevant congressional committees, the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Personnel Management, and the administration's domestic policy advisors.

A long and complex process to repair and strengthen the foundations of one of the nation's most prized institutions has begun. The individuals charged with implementing the Vail Agenda are accepting an immense responsibility and assuming considerable professional risk. Some of their efforts will succeed, while others will not yield satisfactory results. None of these efforts, however, will be failures. The only failure will be inaction. It is incumbent upon the director of the National Park Service, the secretary of the interior, the administration, and Congress to provide the support and leadership that is needed. The commitments to a sound future for the National Park Service are strong; expectations are high. The opportunity for progress should not be missed.

3

ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL

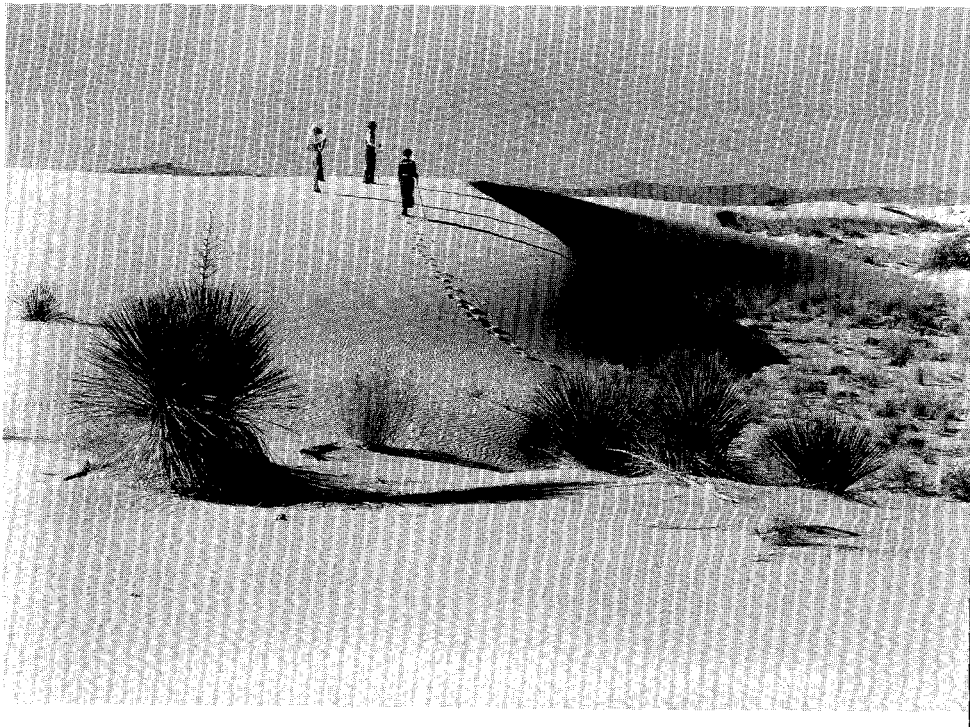
INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service has a rich history on which to draw as it looks toward the future. As an organization, it traces its roots back to the days when the cavalry policed and managed the early parks such as Yellowstone, bringing with them a tradition of strong leadership, independent action, and initiative. More fundamentally, the mission of the Service puts it at the center of national efforts to preserve and interpret our nation's natural and cultural heritage. It is a demanding task in many ways:

> Increasing knowledge and awareness of environmental science has greatly complicated our understanding of the subtle interactions between human activity and the natural environment;
>
> Historical research provides an increasingly complex and subtle understanding of the political, social, economic, and technological forces that have shaped our heritage;
>
> Our heritage is not static. Rather, it is an evolving mosaic, crafted anew by each successive generation. And, in what is most distinctive about the American experience, the traditions and values of each generation of new Americans challenge and enrich our cultural heritage.

These and other factors come together in a dynamic (sometimes volatile) mix that frames the milieu in which the National Park Service operates.

The Service is well-positioned for this challenging task. It is one of the most respected and admired public organizations in the United States. It has its own rich heritage of strong, independent, and colorful leader-



White Sands National Monument

ship in the preservation of our most precious natural and cultural assets. And, it has attracted to its ranks an extraordinary cadre of highly motivated and skilled employees. The best of the NPS middle managers are among the very best in American government. They demonstrate a high degree of sophistication, initiative, political, and social awareness, and capacity for effective leadership.

To assess the organizational needs of the Service, we should first understand its essential culture. Then we turn to the professional orientation and skills of its work force and how these skills match up against current and future demands. Finally, we examine the administrative systems of the Service and how they may best be strengthened to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Culture of the National Park Service

From its military heritage, the Service has fostered a culture of decentralized management, authority, and initiative. Like an eighteenth-century

sea captain, the early rangers had near total responsibility for the resources in their charge. Living in remote, often isolated locations, the rangers were jacks-of-all-trades whose responsibilities ranged from the most mundane to matters of life and death. Rangers were encouraged to assume personal responsibility for care of the nation's resources. Even today, superintendents reflect this proprietary attitude when they talk about the needs of "my park."

The culture of the National Park Service emphasizes and inculcates a number of distinctive values. First, NPS employees are proudly independent. While initially a function of their relative isolation, the tradition of self-reliance and independence is still evident throughout the Service. Second, they exercise an unusual degree of initiative. One must be impressed by the initiatives taken routinely by NPS employees. Whether it is a GS-7 interpreter writing a battlefield history or a GS-13 superintendent organizing an areawide environmental study process, NPS employees stand out in initiative and imagination. Third, NPS employees have a strong personal stake—even a sense of proprietorship—in the protection of the resources in their care. The aforementioned "my park" characterization does not fully capture the attitude of NPS employees toward the preservation of the natural and historical resources which they superintend. Fourth, NPS employees display a high degree of commitment to the park system and their image of the system. This is captured, in part, by the many references to "family" used by NPS employees. Historically, in a fashion similar to the military, one gave over one's whole life to the Service. And the Service reciprocated. There is a high degree of identification with the organization.

Taken together, these elements—independence, initiative, proprietary stake, and high organizational identification—suggest why the Service is regarded as one of the premier institutions in the United States.

At the same time, there are indications that the culture and commitment of NPS employees has begun to erode and, in some instances, has effects which are less productive for the Service. On occasion, the culture of independence and initiative finds expression in actions by a park superintendent that go counter to direction from Washington; or, park employees may actively undercut what they perceive to be "political" actions by their superintendent; or, a park superintendent may quietly lobby key congressional actors ("for my park") on issues that may have adverse consequences for the park system as a whole.

To take a different kind of example, it has been suggested that park superintendents (and the Service itself) too often focus their attention only on what happens within the confines of national parks. Issues are defined in terms of what they mean for a particular park site, rather than the larger ecosystem, nearby communities, or a region as a whole. In the words of one major conservation organization that works closely with them: "The National Park Service is not always a good neighbor." In a similar vein, a park superintendent had attended a meeting of conservation organizations where someone turned to him, asking, "Why is the Service here? You folks must have a budget problem." (The conservationist was right.) And the superintendent told the story to other superintendents (who nodded in agreement), concluding: "We do not work closely enough with other organizations in our community."

Today, the parks have changed, fewer employees live in the parks, more employees view the parks as nine to five jobs, two-career families tug at traditional loyalties, and political appointees try to influence mid-level NPS assignments. All these factors and others have eroded the sense of "family" that was once at the heart of the NPS culture. A group of superintendents tried to explain that, rather than feeling part of a family, they felt more isolated, more distrustful of headquarters, less supported by the regions and needing to depend more on their own political and managerial resources.

Moreover, the Service is suffering from increasing bureaucratization which is eroding the independence, autonomy, and sense of efficacy of many employees. New levels of controls are imposed from regional offices and headquarters. Specialized programs and initiatives become bureaucratic fiefdoms and competing sources of power and influence within the organization. Divisions arise between headquarters executives with no field experience and field personnel who have never served in Washington. In some areas, key managers extend their tenure in particular jobs to ten years and more, seeing the world from an idiosyncratic vantage point at variance with the rest of the organization.

It is hard to know what to make of these qualitative observations. There is no clear baseline or standard of measurement to assess how things are, in fact, different today from the recent past. And, managers in other federal agencies would probably voice similar concerns. But if one combines these elements with the increasing challenges in the NPS job (with its expanding environmental and law enforcement roles) along with

reduced qualifications on the part of new entrants to the work force, it leads to an inescapable conclusion that there is a real risk to the base of high commitment, initiative, and independence that has made the Service a revered institution.

Professionalization in the National Park Service

Everyone loves the park ranger; both the public and many Service employees have an image of the ranger as someone who can do anything. However, current trends—internal and external to the Service—are conspiring to make this archetypal "do anything" ranger outmoded.

First, our concern and awareness of environmental interests has increased dramatically in the past generation. Our understanding of the delicate balance of ecosystems, the wide range of manmade interventions with potentially adverse effects, and the need to balance—in subtle ways—exploitation and use of our natural resources with its preservation, have made the task of environmental management vastly more complex. Given this increased complexity, it is no longer feasible to call upon generalist rangers who lack the needed professional education to make the decisions that have to be made. While 82 percent of all rangers have college degrees, only 66 percent of rangers hired in 1989 had a college degree of any kind. In fact, ranger educational attainment has been steadily declining since the abolition of formal education requirements in 1969. What is equally disturbing is that only 40 percent of all NPS professionals hold degrees in fields related to the management of natural or cultural resources.

Second, we are an increasingly diverse nation. Recent studies highlight the changing racial and ethnic mix of the population and the future national work force. The recreational, cultural, and historical needs and interests of the American population in the next century will be far more diverse and complex than when the Service was founded in 1916. It will be important to attract and retain people knowledgeable in special cultural and historical fields, and it will be necessary to make the Service a more attractive career option to minorities.

Third, the mission of the Service has become increasingly diffuse. Once focused on the preservation of America's natural crown jewels, the expansion and diversification of the park system has significantly complicated the task of park employees. Many of the newer parks symbolize important historical and cultural events, movements, and people, and pro-

vide access to important ideas. In fact, there are now a total of sixteen different classifications for units within the national park system: national battlefield, national battlefield site, national battlefield park, national historical park, national historic site, national lakeshore, national monument, national memorial, national military park, national park, national preserve, national river or riverway, national recreation area, national seashore, national scenic river or riverway, and national parkway.

Finally, law enforcement, particularly in the urban parks, has become a more complicated task as drugs and urban violence ignore park boundaries. At the same time, the isolation of some rural parks has proved an irresistible lure to other forms of criminality.

The National Park Service is, and must be, a highly decentralized operating organization. Each of the 359 sites managed by the Service is different. Each has its own distinctive history and cultural context, its own ecological features, and its own political, economic, and social context. Successful leadership at each site requires a unique adaptation of general NPS policies to idiosyncratic local circumstances. Many initiatives, including partnerships with other public and private organizations, participation in community and regional planning and policy development are best conceived, planned, and implemented at the site, or (where two or more sites are in close proximity) at the subregional level.

Most of the critical transactions between citizens and the Service take place in the parks, remote from headquarters, regional offices, and, in larger parks, distant from the superintendent. Other encounters involve park leadership with local and state officials and private interests. Whether one is dealing with visitors, park criminality, the effect of development on a watershed, or regional, cultural, or environmental concerns, key judgments are best made locally. Most NPS managers agree with this characterization. It is consistent with the organization's long heritage and remains an element of the current reality, at least for some superintendents.

But our review suggests there is a gap between rhetoric and reality in the National Park Service. As one former assistant regional director told us, "The rhetoric said we were there to help the parks, particularly the smaller parks. The reality was that we were galvanized by the big park issues and spent lots of time on politically sensitive questions." Superintendents in smaller parks talk about the difficulty of getting timely assistance from headquarters and the regions ("they operate on their own

time") and these same superintendents said bureaucratic retribution would follow if they complained too loudly about lack of support and assistance.

Careers in the National Park Service

For purposes of illustration, a NPS career can be divided into three phases. The initial phase (first eight to ten years) takes place at the field level. In this phase, many employees provide front-line service to the visiting public in either protection or interpretation. The public will question the employee about park resources (i.e., what is this plant? what causes this event? why is this species in decline? etc.). The personnel at this level are representing the National Park Service to the public; they are educators and ambassadors and are developing understandings of resource impacts and public use. They need to be articulate and knowledgeable about natural processes and basic natural resource concepts. At this point, historical events relative to a given site can be learned and applied through reading and research. Other professionals will practice their craft (architecture, engineering, administration) in this period of their career. All professional employees need a strong educational base that will provide the necessary skills to support this stage.

The second career phase (mid-level work) is framed from year 10 to years 18 to 20. These are the years when field personnel begin assuming supervisory jobs. They generally oversee the activities of both permanent and seasonal personnel. The employees rely heavily on their own first-level experience gained at various park units. Now it is necessary for these employees to understand budget and administrative procedure, and to acquire and demonstrate supervisory skills. As first-line supervisors, they devote much of their time to the training, mentoring, and oversight of their immediate subordinates.

The third career phase (senior-level management: years 20 to 30 and beyond) is comprised of superintendents, heads of functional units, regional office managers, etc. At this level, program direction, management decisions, and issues or dispute resolution require a well-founded basis of experience. Policy implementation must be sensitive to agency culture, law regulation, and policy. Experience at levels 1 and 2 is essential. To strengthen performance at this level, managers need continuing education and growth. At the senior level, the NPS needs to provide training and experience that will provide exposure to new applications and enhance

public administration skills. Senior development programs, advanced education, and mentoring are extremely important.

Each phase in a professional career should provide new challenges, opportunities for growth, and the chance to master new skills.

Organizational Renewal

Today, there is not a single National Park Service. It varies from region to region and park to park. The culture described earlier is fraying at the edges. In this world, the big parks—the crown jewels—will do fine. They have extensive networks of supporters and substantial professional resources, are politically sensitive and (often) are led by the most experienced and savvy superintendents. But smaller and newer NPS sites will suffer. And the reverence and respect of the American public, that most precious of NPS assets, will begin to erode.

Renewal of the NPS organization, at its core, should have three broad objectives:

> First, to affirm the best of the NPS heritage and culture; to refocus the entire NPS organization on support of park management; and, to strengthen the identification and loyalty of all employees with the mission of the NPS.
>
> Second, as the NPS is strengthened internally, to further open the organization to relationships with other public and private organizations; to both learn from other institutions and share the NPS culture and expertise; to draw on resources of other organizations, and to build partnerships which advance NPS goals and the public interest.
>
> Third, to strengthen the professional leadership of the National Park Service; to equip its career leaders with the management and leadership skills needed to foster renewal of the Service; and to undertake its leadership role in the preservation and interpretation of our national heritage.

Each of these objectives leads to multiple recommendations, affecting the ways in which NPS personnel are recruited and trained, career paths, NPS structure and incentives, how resource allocation decisions are made, and how the National Park Service is financed.

Organizational renewal is a never-ending task. Successful organizations must constantly reexamine their operating premises, test and adapt

their organization, and equip their personnel with new skills. The history of American management is one of constant organizational change and adaptation as institutions—both public and private—compete for scarce resources. And, like other organizations with a strong mission focus, the Service has concentrated its investments in increasing its understanding of the substantive challenges it faces (in areas such as resource and cultural preservation). The Service has devoted less attention to the organizational and administrative implications of these challenges, a feature common among public organizations.

The Working Group on Organizational Renewal has focused its attention on the question of how the administrative capacities of the Service might be adapted to enhance the organization's resilience and ability to meet the challenges ahead. We have inquired about formal administrative systems (structure, personnel, and budget), as well as attempted to gain insight into informal systems such as the norms, values, and culture of the organization. Knowledge of both formal and informal systems are critical in shaping the collective capacity of institutions to adapt to change. In shaping the strategy of any organization, a key task is to harness the internal administrative systems to produce the skills, orientation, incentives, and behavior appropriate to the substantive challenges confronting the organization.

We have identified four areas where there is significant potential for strengthening the human and institutional capacity of the National Park Service. It is not our intent to be critical of either past or current practice, but to reflect the need of all human organizations to constantly adapt as we learn more about the challenges facing our institutions and the potential contribution to organizational effectiveness of changes in structure, systems, and personnel. The four areas of opportunity we have identified are:

> First, how can the human resource systems for recruitment, orientation, training, and development enhance the organization's base of knowledge, professional skills, its cohesion and sense of shared commitment?
>
> Second, how can the process of identifying, testing, training, and developing the managers and leaders of the Service be improved?
>
> Third, how can the structure, procedures, and culture of the organization be enhanced in ways that more effectively focus

the resources of the organization on the front-line task of operating the system's 359 parks, sites, and other facilities?

Fourth, how can the Service enhance its ability to acquire and manage responsibly the large-scale financial resources essential to its mission? And, how can it stimulate and exploit the evident interest of private organizations in supporting the goals of the Service?

Each of these areas is discussed below.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

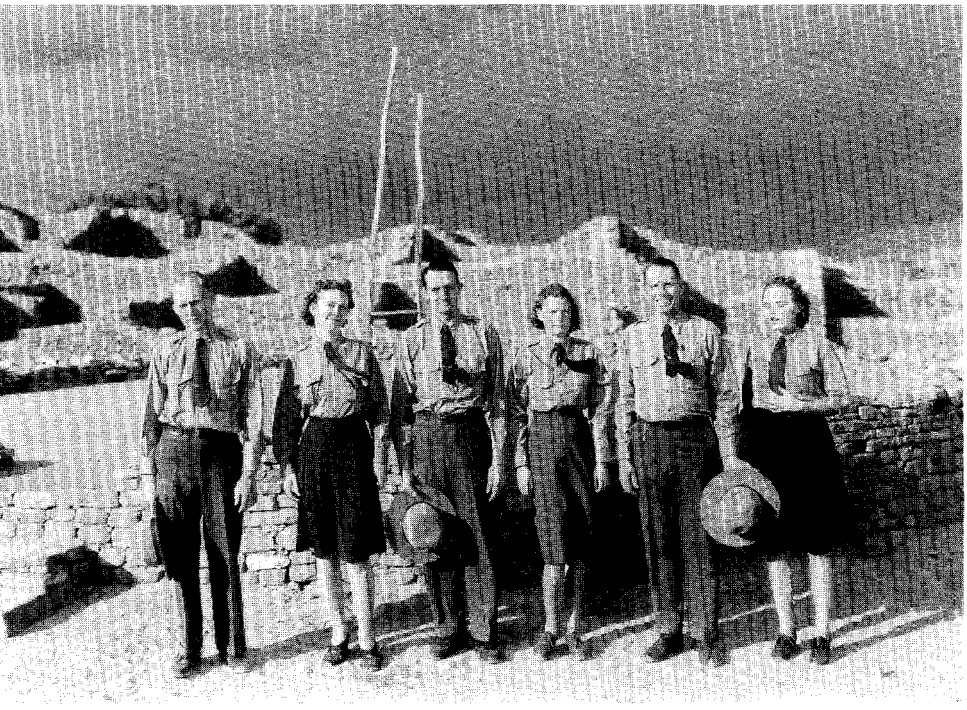
Issue 1

How can the human resource systems for recruitment, orientation, training, and development enhance the organization's base of knowledge, professional skills, its cohesion, and sense of shared commitment?

Background and Findings

There are many distinctive features of the human resource needs of the National Park Service. For example, a sizable fraction of the work force is seasonal, many returning to the Service year after year. Second, many NPS jobs require a particular blend of specialized knowledge along with excellent communication and interpretation skills. A corollary is that Service personnel are expected to be jacks-of-all-trades—exhibiting broad knowledge, multiple skills, and a high degree of adaptability. This has been somewhat problematic for NPS employees, as the civil service classification system bases its judgment about appropriate grade structure (and thus pay) on the acquisition of highly specialized knowledge and educational requirements. The classification system awards points for depth more than for the breadth of professional skills typically required of NPS personnel. The Service has gradually weakened the educational requirements for key series with the consequence that the grade structure is depressed, and it is increasingly difficult to attract well-qualified candidates. At the same time, the Service seems reluctant to weed out poor performers, which reduces the opportunity to promote younger, more able personnel.

Similarly, with the exception of law enforcement, NPS training and development is largely individually focused and initiated. There are no



Aztec Ruins National Monument

clear career paths for rangers or other professional and administrative employees, nor are there Service-prescribed progressions of training and skill enhancement. The Service spends more on training than do many federal agencies (about 1.5 percent of payroll), though, in the past, much of it was focused on initial and refresher training for those employees involved in law enforcement. Current training policies do not reflect a clear corporate sense of NPS needs and skills for its work force.

Recruitment procedures are highly decentralized and somewhat haphazard. There is no national recruiting program. Most permanent professional employees come from the ranks of seasonal and part-time people, who after a number of years find a means of entry into the career service. For example, of the 150 to 200 new rangers hired each year, more than 80 percent begin their permanent employment at five parks. A common pattern is for a seasonal employee to accept a low-graded, nonprofessional position in an urban park such as Independence or Gateway, establish permanent civil service status, and move into the ranger ranks.

New hires are the most persistent, not necessarily the best-qualified. And, the absence of national recruiting makes it much more difficult to broaden the diversity of the NPS work force.

The consequence is a work force with declining educational and professional qualifications at the very time when far more is needed. To address this issue, the National Park Service must develop a comprehensive, servicewide human resource policy and strategy to act in the following manner.

Recommendations

The Service should establish a standardized process for recruiting and hiring NPS personnel in key career fields. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. Review all series used in the Service and determine which have recruitment and/or retention problems. Work with the Office of Personnnel Management (OPM) to identify appropriate strategies to strengthen any series so identified.
2. Establish positive educational requirements as appropriate for positions that need a strong base of technical, scientific, cultural, or administrative knowledge. In particular, the park ranger series should have a degree requirement at entry level. Degrees could be in either natural resource or cultural resource/history specialties. There should be a specific list of qualifying degrees.
3. Work with OPM to establish a single-agency classification and qualification standard for park rangers and seek delegated examining authority. The Service is by far the single greatest user of the park ranger register and thus can argue that employees hired from it must meet this agency's needs. The existing standard should be revised to require academic credentials and to reflect the unique demands of park ranger work. Rangers must be versatile, adaptable, and able to independently integrate a broad variety of information in complex field settings where their decisions have far-reaching consequences.
4. Develop a strategy to provide for the transition of current NPS employees who do not meet newly established educational requirements. It is important that current employees not be adversely affected by the adoption of stronger standards for new hires. The Service should develop a transition strategy that pro-

vides existing employees opportunities to enhance their professional skills and educational background.

5. Ensure that the process gives full consideration to high-quality seasonals and current NPS employees. Currently, managers in the field use a variety of creative hiring processes to give deserving seasonals permanent status. This has developed to circumvent the cumbersome and time-consuming centralized process managed by OPM. Unfortunately, because these "back door" methods often require no effective competition, the Service as a whole may not be getting the best. While qualified seasonals will in no way be disadvantaged by the proposed new procedures, closing back-door hiring is essential to building a quality work force.

The Service should strengthen recruitment, hiring, and retention of a culturally diverse work force. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. Take full advantage of special hiring authorities such as student co-op programs. Provide the opportunity to hold vacant appropriate intake positions for competitive placement of student co-op graduates.
2. Encourage students to engage in seasonal or part-time work with the Service during their undergraduate years, so as to be well positioned to compete for permanent, professional positions upon graduation.
3. Use contemporary and creative means to reach out to schoolchildren and visitors in underrepresented groups to familiarize them with the Service and its career opportunities. The Service needs to be substantially more creative in recruitment and affirmative action measures. Such approaches as early outreach, use of nontraditional media, and aggressive placement must be adopted. For example, by the time students reach high school age, their concept of who they are and the kinds of work they might do have begun to gel. It is less effective to introduce the Service to them for the first time at this stage of their lives. The Service needs to reach out to younger children and visiting families, introducing them to the NPS system and mission so that they become comfortable and familiar with it before employment becomes an issue. This must be done using words and images that have meaning for target groups.

The Service should establish typical career paths within each key career field that define opportunities and establish realistic expectations for their achievement. To implement this recommendation mechanisms should be provided to assess individual achievement toward career goals. This is most effective when redefinition of career goals and expectations takes place on a recurring basis. Such discussions should include typical expectations for tenure and mobility, and a review of options for alternative career or job design where either the employee's or agency's expectations are not being met.

The Service should initiate and implement a comprehensive program for employee training and development based on the preparation of a plan for each career field which addresses the knowledge and skill enhancement required at key points in each career cycle. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. Continued support for employee development must be far more aggressive and institutionalized. NPS employees too often find themselves the least up-to-date in their chosen fields when serving on panels and interagency work groups. Though often cited as a morale issue, there are actually far greater costs in terms of professional effectiveness in the field and leadership credibility outside the Service.
2. At lower levels, improved support could take the form of more and better-directed training, in-house requirements for refreshers where legal requirements don't already exist, and recognition of those who pursue additional job-related training on their own. Later support could include allowing time or money for advanced academic training (such as training in new technical approaches or advanced degree work) or supporting attendance at a certain number of related professional meetings.

The Service should strengthen policy and encourage supporting career-development programs that demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of changing work force demographics. This policy should address issues such as mobility, housing assistance, job-sharing, flexible work schedules, spouse employment assistance, locality pay, and the problems of two-career couples. Steps to implement these recommendations are:

1. Moving is stressful in and of itself. Now, with more and more employed spouses and dual-career couples, as well as other demographic changes, the need to move may materially interfere with career growth. The Service needs to identify disincentives to mobility where they appear to interfere with career growth or with the needs of the Service. These impediments should be addressed far more systematically and with more resources than in the past.
2. In addition, the Service should avail itself of the long-term work force demographic projections that private sector research has developed in order to plan such support programs, as well as other matters relating to recruitment and retention, ten to fifteen years ahead.

The Service should develop a top-quality orientation and initial training program for all NPS employees. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. Prior to starting work, employees should complete a brief NPS orientation program.
2. All employees should receive training upon reporting to the initial job site, as well as orientation to their specific tasks and responsibilities.
3. For those identified key career fields, new hires should complete a more substantial initial training program that focuses on skills and traditions. During the second half of their initial year, those persons should complete more specialized professional training in their chosen field.
4. For park rangers, on completion of training and other assignments in the trainee's initial year and a successful probationary review, he or she would be promoted to the next grade (GS-9 if hired at GS-7). Subsequent promotions should involve transfer to a new site.
5. For those career fields selected for the more substantial initial program, consideration should be given to reestablishing the "boot camp" approach epitomized by the old "Introduction to National Park Service Operations" course. Such residential, intensive programs can be a highly effective means of passing on vital elements of agency culture.

Finally, the Service should review the existing NPS grade structure and, working with OPM, initiate actions to correct inequities.

Issue 2

How should the process of identifying, testing, training, and developing the managers and leaders of the Service be improved?

Background and Findings

Among the many issues discussed with NPS personnel, one in which there was wide agreement was the poor state of management and executive development within the National Park Service. Superintendents and others shared countless stories of simply being dropped into managerial roles with neither formal nor informal training or mentoring. No doubt, those who survive are the better for it. But it inflicts undue hardship on both the managers themselves, their employees, and, ultimately, the organization. The fact that many superintendents are poorly prepared for their managerial roles invites regional and headquarters managers to closely monitor their performance, impose bureaucratic controls, and rob young superintendents of their autonomy and opportunity to grow. In some regions, expenditures in some categories of as little as a few hundred dollars require regional approval. This level of "oversight" is justified on the grounds of the poor preparation of superintendents. The reality is a deadening of initiative and increasing bureaucratization of the Service.

There is no credible servicewide program to identify and develop managerial talent. The Service participates in departmental programs, including those for management development, largely on the initiative of the individual. There is no institutional focus or priority for the development of its future leadership.

Recommendations

The Service should develop a new midlevel program to identify, select, and train promising employees as prospective managers and future leaders. These employees could come from any of the job series.

The Service should establish career paths for managerial employees that begin at the GS-11 level.

The Service should establish a senior-level executive development program (primarily GM 14/15 and above).

The Service should establish a Human Resource Management (HRM) board that would serve three functions:

1. Manage the assignment, training, and development of the top 10 percent of NPS managers (say, 50 to 70 positions). Major personnel decisions for top agency leadership positions (top jobs in the Washington office, regional offices, and key superintendencies) would be made by the NPS HRM board to ensure optimal deployment of talent across the agency.
2. Review and approve all proposed candidate slates for assignment of the 750 GM employees in senior management positions. Actual assignment decisions would be made by appropriate regional or headquarters managers based on the HRM-board–approved list of qualified candidates.
3. Develop the comprehensive, servicewide human resource policy described under Issue 1.

The Service should have such an effective development program that senior positions are primarily filled from within the agency. However, all senior jobs should generally be competitive nationwide.

Issue 3

How can the structure, procedures, and culture of the National Park Service be enhanced in ways that more effectively focus resources on the operation of the system's parks and sites?

Background and Findings

Public institutions exist to create public value, much as private institutions generate private value. What should be noted in the case of the Service is that virtually all of its value-creating activities are centered in individual

parks and sites. It is essential to operate these sites in ways that preserve their natural, cultural, and historic properties while facilitating public education and enjoyment. This is the core of the Service mission. Yet today, nearly 30 percent of all NPS employees (including all twenty-one NPS senior executives) work outside the structure of the parks. In theory, many of them exist to "support" the parks and activities therein. In reality, the support resources in regional and headquarters offices become instruments of secondary control through special programs and supplementary appropriations. Many such staff operate, in effect, in the line, for those parks led by less experienced managers. These more junior superintendents find themselves hamstrung by bureaucracy and petty controls. At the same time, the more experienced superintendents, frustrated by the bureaucracy of headquarters staff and regional offices, will circumvent them, dealing directly with top officials inside and outside the Service. In some cases, senior superintendents circumvent the management structure of the Service altogether, dealing directly with members and key staff in Congress. There are, of course, NPS staff not directly involved with federal park sites. Grant and technical assistance programs provide resources to state, local, and private parks. Here, too, the critical issue is to focus attention on the park site where the public encounters park staff and resources.

We believe there needs to be a major rethinking of the role of staff in regional offices and headquarters and a careful segregation of responsibilities between functions of support and service to the parks, liaison with non-NPS groups (such as state, municipal, and private entities), and control and oversight. Front-line managers need to be supported and empowered to make key managerial and program judgments. The change in thinking and behavior needed in the NPS is similar to changes in many business organizations as they have tried to get closer to the customer. Innovative government programs—including those of Minnesota state government, the city of Phoenix, and the U.S. Forest Service pilot program—have shown how productivity and employee morale can both gain from these kinds of initiatives.

Put simply, the organization must focus its resources more effectively on the person of its site managers. This requires a new approach to training and management development mentioned above, coupled with broader grants of authority to superintendents and relief from unnecessary controls and interference by staff in line operations.

Recommendations

The Service should introduce internal market incentives into the provision of support services for the park system. The aim is to better focus all resources of the National Park Service to support educational, recreational, and cultural activities in the parks and other sites.

There should be a thorough strategic audit of functions performed in regions, headquarters, service centers, and parks. It should have three purposes:

1. Ensure that the functions add value to the mission of the Service.
2. Determine at which levels the functions can best be performed.
3. Evaluate the number of regions needed to carry out the NPS mission effectively.

Key superintendencies and selected regional management jobs should be established as career-reserved Senior Executive Service (SES) positions.

We recommend that, henceforth, all SES positions within the Service have, as a prerequisite, park managerial experience or comparable field experience in other organizations.

Senior managers should shift assignments every five or six years.

Issue 4

How can the National Park Service enhance its ability to acquire and manage responsibly the large-scale financial resources essential to its mission? How can it stimulate and exploit the evident interests of private institutions in contributing to the goals of the organization?

Background and Findings

The finances of the National Park Service are in something of a muddle. Park superintendents are frustrated by widespread controls imposed by regional and headquarters staff, as well as by a resource allocation process that fails to recognize service priorities, meet adequate service levels, or

provide clarity to overseers and the public. On the one hand, there are concerns about an enormous backlog of unfunded maintenance and construction projects. On the other hand, there is deep skepticism about the quality of information supporting such claims. There is an absence of clear service and performance standards and concern about the adequacy of accounting and reporting systems. Management, at all levels of the Service, has failed to give this issue the attention it deserves.

As one of the most popular public institutions, the Service has the capacity to compete effectively for public dollars in the political arena and to attract private support. We believe there is great potential to elicit private help to meet realistic needs of the parks while at the same time reducing demands on the federal treasury in ways that are consistent with the values and mission of the Service. Strengthening the financial management capacity of the organization is a concomitant requirement to ensure that funds are spent in the most cost-effective manner.

Finally, there has been a flurry of interest and proposals to alter the long-standing NPS policy on concessions. The purpose of concessions policy over the years has been to ensure the availability of needed goods and services to park visitors. The price, character, and scope of services provided is tightly controlled by the Service. Concessionaires pay a franchise fee (typically around 3 percent of their gross sales) to the government in exchange for the opportunity to operate in the parks. Generally, concessionaires finance, construct, and maintain their facilities, retaining property rights (known as possessory interest) though not acquiring legal title to the lands. The length of concession agreements varies, but some run for twenty or more years (with reviews of scope, prices, and fees every five years).

Some more recent agreements (such as the innovative TW Services contract in Yellowstone) take a different tack. They are contracts to operate government-owned facilities (the vendor has no property right) and the vendor is given credit for agreed maintenance and renovation expenditures. The contract provides that the combination of credits and vendor payments to the government amounts to 22 percent of gross sales. This figure has been bandied about recklessly by some officials and has been inappropriately compared with the franchise fees of 3 to 3.5 percent under traditional contracts.

It is the working group's feeling that the government can and should realize somewhat higher returns from concessionaires, albeit at the

likely cost of somewhat higher prices to park visitors. But before policy decisions are made, there needs to be a much more careful illumination of the complex issues and rights of both the government and its highly regulated concessionaires, most of whom have provided quality service to the public over many years.

Recommendations

The Service should reevaluate its fees to ensure that they are fair and market-competitive. Current legislative authority that permits 50 percent of all entrance fees paid at a park to remain in that park should be reaffirmed.

The Service should give financial management greater priority. Steps to implement these recommendations are:

1. The Service should develop a set of pilot budgets for several parks to reflect the actual relationships between costs, service levels, and performance standards.
2. The Service must strengthen financial management training for all managerial personnel and for those directly involved in budget administration, development, and concession management.
3. The Service should evaluate the Accounting Operations Division to determine whether decentralization would make it more efficient.

The Service should experiment with partnerships with a wide range of public and private organizations to fund projects in specific parks as well as to meet servicewide needs.

The Service should establish a more coherent concession policy, improve the ways it accounts for and represents concession income and contractual relationships, introduce greater competition into the process, realize higher returns from concessionaires, and recognize creative contributions to the NPS mission by concessioners.

We recommend immediate approval of the proposed America the Beautiful pass, which admits holders to all NPS units for an annual fee of $35,

and the increase of park-specific annual pass fees where appropriate. The increase revenues from these fees should be dedicated to improved services and support for the National Park Service rather than offsetting regular park appropriations.

CONCLUSION

The National Park Service has many strengths. The recommendations of the working group are intended to enhance the skills and training of its work force, strengthen its career managerial corps, and help it acquire and manage responsibly the resources needed to continue its proud tradition as one of America's outstanding public institutions.

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4

Park Use and Enjoyment

Introduction

This chapter describes the deliberations of the working group on park use and enjoyment. We approached the task aware that the Vail Symposium is part of a historical tradition of self-examination in American conservation and government. Secretary of Interior Walter L. Fisher convened the first national parks conference at Yellowstone in 1911; other conferences and studies have followed. Therefore, we began by collecting the findings and recommendations of earlier efforts. To read these reports is to gain respect for the insight of past study groups, and to realize that many of the challenges facing the National Park Service seem chronic.

Some examples of previous reports we studied are: *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States* (1941), prepared by the Department of the Interior; The landmark, multivolume report of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (1963); *Man and Nature in the National Parks* (1967), prepared by ecologist Fraser Darling and geographer Noel Eichorn; The Conservation Foundation's *National Parks for a New Generation* (1985); *Report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors* (1987); The National Parks and Conservation Association's *Investing in Park Futures: A Blueprint for Tomorrow* (1988); and The National Park Service's *21st Century Task Force Report* (1990).

We also were aware of the need not to be fully in the grip of the past. Historian and student of the national park movement Robin Winks has applauded the seventy-fifth anniversary of the National Park Service, but reminds us to look forward and with a wide view:

> A time of celebration tends to be long on retrospection and short on prospection . . . though one must never forget the intensity of environmental challenges faced by the Park Service, one must see those problems within a larger frame.

Therefore, we attempted to gather and examine the trend analyses, alternative futures, scientific predictions, estimates, and provocative speculations that relate to park use and enjoyment. Because this includes everything from demographic trends in the American population to advances in communication technology and changing social values, we could only be representative. And we were determined to make our predictions with humility in our ability to forecast the future, and not to avoid unpleasantness and uncertainty if we found it.

Ours is a nation and world that is rapidly changing, and any public service agency that is not adapting will eventually create its own crises. Hence, the National Park Service must act. A sense of urgency underlies our efforts. We have tried to be critical yet constructive, optimistic yet realistic.

A Brief History of Visitors to the National Park System

During the mid-1800s, few people visited the areas that would later become national parks. (Throughout this report, the words *sites* and *parks* are used interchangeably to reflect the full range of management units in the national park system—battlefields, national monuments, recreation areas, national parks, wilderness areas, historic sites, seashores, and so forth.) This changed with the coming of the railroads, the construction of hotels, and the social acceptance of national parks as vacation destinations. Lured to the west by advertisements of the railroads, these tourists were mostly the eastern elite and foreign aristocracy. Once in the park, visitors would stay for several weeks; some for a month or the entire summer. Visitors did little hiking or camping. An alternative to hotel accommodations appeared when a camping service was established at Yellowstone in 1893. Similar camping businesses soon appeared in other national parks.

The years 1908 to 1915 were largely characterized by the coming of the automobile. For years, automobiles were not allowed inside the parks. Public pressure mounted as the automobile became more reliable and affordable. Individual auto owners joined the politically powerful auto clubs, and in 1913, under enormous pressure, the secretary of interior allowed autos to enter the Yosemite Valley. Motor cars began transporting

tourists to numerous other national parks; auto caravans became annual events.

The National Park Service's first director, Stephen Mather, and his assistant, Horace Albright, realized that increased public use was the best defense of park resources. They worked to expand the parks' constituency by promoting park tourism. By the time the National Park Service was established in 1916, most national parks had designated campgrounds. The middle class was visiting the national parks and camping rather than staying in the grand hotels. Camping (or "sagebrushing" as it was called) encouraged the development of more campgrounds, fishing docks, trails, and other outdoor recreation facilities. Companies such as Coleman, which had been manufacturing portable stoves for the Army, entered the new market; improved tents, cookware, clothing, and other specialized products were to become desired components of modern camping.

With the addition of national parks like Acadia (1919), Shenandoah (1926) and Great Smoky Mountains (1926), the national park system expanded in the heavily populated East. By 1941, Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah were the most visited parks in the system, each receiving approximately twice as many visits as Yosemite or Yellowstone. The shift of War Department historical sites (such as Gettysburg) and the public parks in Washington, D.C., to the National Park Service in 1931, created a new population of visitors and new types of use for the Service.

Park use and enjoyment was, of course, not limited to the national park system. Municipal parks such as Central Park in New York City were established in the 1850s, and beginning in 1884 state parks, state forest reserves, and historic parks were developed. Throughout the 1920s, the U.S. Forest Service expanded its outdoor recreation mission.

Development of visitor facilities in the national parks received a boost when the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was established in 1933 as part of the New Deal. By 1935, 188 CCC camps were operating in the national parks; hundreds of buildings, trails, ranger cabins, and campgrounds were completed and thousands of young men introduced to park areas. After economic recovery, visitors returned to the parks in increasing numbers. This trend continued until World War II, when visitation dropped to 1920 levels. Several national parks were used for military training, introducing these sites to young men who would return (with families) as tourists.

After the war, visitors again flocked to the national parks in increasing numbers, fueled by the postwar mobility and affluence of American society. Cars and roads were bigger and faster; visitors drove from park to park and spent less time in each. The sharply increased travel meant traffic jams, crowded facilities, and full campgrounds and hotels. In 1956 the National Park Service began a revitalization plan—Mission 66. For most visitors this meant newer and speedier highways, better developed campgrounds, expanded and repaired visitor facilities. For others, it meant that the pristine character of many parks was giving way to development.

In the 1960s, and with a policy emphasis of "parks for the people," the mission of the National Park Service was expanded to include recreation and urban areas not traditionally treated as national parks. Major urban park initiatives were undertaken in New York, San Francisco, Cleveland, and Los Angeles. As a result, visitors to the system became more diverse. The Wilderness Act of 1964 led to the official designation of numerous wilderness areas within units of the national park system, adding additional requirements to management of the selected lands. Turmoil in the nation was reflected in the parks, culminating in a Fourth of July weekend riot in Yosemite Valley in 1970.

From 1973 to 1979, systemwide visitation fluctuated with the price and availability of gasoline. Interstate travel diminished, though use of the system rose slightly. Parks near urban centers received most of this increase. Back country camping and wilderness use increased to all-time high levels, with permit systems regulating visitation. International visitors to NPS sites dramatically increased as the United States became a foreign tourist destination. New kinds of national park sites were added (such as Lowell), and the Alaskan additions began to attract visitors.

The General Outdoor Recreation Situation in the United States

The national park system cannot be understood or managed in isolation; the Service is one of several agencies responsible for outdoor recreation. Participation in outdoor recreation activities on public lands has increased virtually every year since World War II. Local parks and recreation areas are used most often, and the growth in municipal recreation land has closely paralleled the population growth in cities. Visitation to state park systems has grown steadily, but total acreage has decreased slightly; emphasis is on intensive management of existing acreage and facilities rather than expansion. An unprecedented number of tourists are visiting federal

recreation lands, including national parks, wilderness areas, forests, and wildlife refuges. Day use of these areas has grown more than overnight stays. In response to the increasing number of visitors, multiple-use federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, have initiated policies which place a greater emphasis on recreation.

Recreation opportunities and demand are greatly influenced by changing landscape patterns. Suburbanization is converting rural farmland to housing developments; rural communities near wilderness areas are experiencing population increases. Coastal areas (along the oceans, Great Lakes, and other shorelines) continue to lose open space and public access; such landscape changes increase pressure on existing recreation sites.

Recreational activities have diversified with the development of new lifestyles and technologies. Commitment to fitness has encouraged a move toward more physically demanding activities, and participation in high-risk adventure (such as hang gliding, rock climbing, and white-water sports) soared with adulthood of the baby-boom generation. Technological changes in recreation equipment have changed recreation participation by making activities more comfortable and accessible. Outerwear and other clothing have been revolutionized; advances in alloys and composites have led to lighter weight, greater strength, and improved performance in backpacks, skis, bicycles, sunglasses, and other equipment. In some cases (the snowmobile, for example) new recreation activities have been spawned by equipment development. Outdoor recreation is an important industry: American consumers spent $100 billion on outdoor recreation in 1984.

Current Use and Enjoyment

Our knowledge of contemporary national park system use and enjoyment is fragmented, but some useful statistics exist. From 1980 to 1989, the total number of visits grew 35 percent, and is now over 258 million annually. National parks account for less than one-quarter of total visits to the system (see table). The southeast and western regions of the National Park Service host 45 percent of all visits. A large proportion of visits are to areas added to the system after 1971; a shift in visits from the summer (still the busiest time for the parks) to other seasons is occurring, though not uniformly across the system.

Visits to Selected Types of National Park System Areas, 1990

Type of Area	Recreation Visits	
	in millions	*% of total*
National Parks	58	22
National Recreation Areas	47	18
National Parkways	29	11
National Monuments	24	9
National Historical Parks	22	8
National Seashores	20	8
National Historic Sites	15	6
National Memorials	13	6
Other Types of Areas	31	12

Source: National Park Service, 1991.

A recent report of the Service, entitled *A Diversity of Visitors: A Report on Visitors to the national park system*, provides a descriptive profile of current park use, based on a series of surveys conducted in 1985 to 1989 in over twenty parks. The findings suggest that use varies significantly from park to park; a brief description follows.

People of all ages visit the national parks. Each park attracts a distinct mix of age groups. Cost, access, available facilities, and purpose of visit influence these patterns. National park visitors represent the global community, and at a few parks at certain times, international visitors outnumber U.S. visitors. The growing number of international visitors is due partly to the maturing of the tourism industry worldwide and the increased prosperity of select nations. It is also due to the inherent attractiveness of the national parks to international tourists wanting to "see America." United States citizens travel from all over the country to visit national parks, and each park has a geographically distinct mix of visitors. Some parks, such as Glen Canyon, draw visitors from a limited region. Others, such as Gettysburg, are visited by people from a broader regional area. Still others, like Grand Teton, attract visitors from all over the country.

Families are the most common group, and reflect the diversity of family life in the United States: married couples, single parents and children, large extended families, and other social arrangements. There are exceptions: many of the urban recreation areas like Gateway and suburban

sites like Valley Forge attract individual visitors, and some sites attract large numbers of tour groups. Still others, like Natchez Trace, are largely used by commuters.

Visitors enjoy many activities in the parks. Some activities, such as sightseeing, are almost universal. Other activities, like camping in the back country of Mount Rainier or taking historical tours at Harpers Ferry, involve only a relatively small portion of park visitors. Participation in specific activities varies from park to park, depending upon visitor interests and the availability of services. Their opinions about the importance of services are varied. At most parks, the park map and brochure, good directional signs, and clean restrooms are rated most important. And when asked to evaluate the quality of services, from lodging to interpretive programs to emergency medical care to food service, most visitors rate them above average, though some visitors are extremely disappointed and critical.

Such statistics are informative, and they warn against a standardized, centralized, and inflexible approach to managing visitors. They do not describe the reasons why people visit the parks. A 1991 national survey of adults conducted for Citibank reported several "major reasons": to see nature (86%), to vacation (82%), to see some place new (76%), to see history (69%). Yet the reasons people visit the national parks may be more cultural, sentimental, emotional than numbers suggest; one elderly visitor wrote on her questionnaire:

> I have traveled all of the lower forty-eight states, and shirley [sic], Yellowstone is the American Garden of Eden.

The stereotype of uncaring park visitors rushing madly to collect unauthentic souvenirs, demanding elaborate services, and barely contemplating (and not comprehending) the unique resources around them is, like all stereotypes, simple and wrong. There is a diversity of visitors using the national park system, and no one description will do them justice.

Future Trends

To predict the future is to have confidence in the past: we hope historical knowledge of trends and events will somehow empower us to predict what may happen next. There have been many predictions about the future of American society and its impact upon the use and enjoyment of the national park system. For example, the 1941 report, *A Study of the*

Mount Rainier National Park

Park and Recreation Problem of the United States, made several accurate predictions: the United States population would dramatically age; leisure time would increase; the rural population would decline; demand for outdoor recreation would increase. It also made wildly inaccurate predictions: the population of the United States would peak at 158 million in 1980 (it was over 200 million and growing); the industrial East would continue to grow and the South would not (the reverse was true); cultural differences would disappear as a national culture emerged.

Hence, predictions about the future of the national park system and how it will be used must be treated cautiously. It is unlikely that our predictions will be fully accurate. In addition, too few efforts at predicting the American future look at its grimmer side: the rise in inequality between the rich and poor, the increasing poverty overtaking whole segments of the population, the enfeebling effects of drug addiction, the decline of the public school system, environmental degradation and its

impact on health, among others. Will not these trends also affect the leisure and recreation habits of the citizenry?

Several reports have provided predictions relevant to park use and enjoyment. The 1977 Third Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan argued that two key trends will influence park use: the geographical shift of people to the South and West and the aging of the population. An analysis of the outdoor recreation needs of the American public was completed in 1986 by the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. The *Report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors* offered the following specific predictions, essentially repeated in the National Parks and Conservation Association's *Investing in Park Futures*:

> The baby-boom generation is approaching middle age and is likely to increase its park going owing to higher discretionary income.
>
> Senior citizens will increase from 12 percent of the current population to between 18 to 24 percent of the population by 2030. Their demand for outdoor recreation is uncertain.
>
> By 2000, 60 percent of the population will live in the South or West; demand for recreation areas in the South may exceed supply.
>
> Leisure time is decreasing due to dual-career families and the entry of women into the work force. Park visits are likely to be more planned and of shorter duration.

The National Park Service's 21st Century Task Force repeats several of these predictions about park use and enjoyment, such as more year-round use, increased demand for "nontraditional" activities, and the need of visitors for more sophisticated information to aid in visit planning.

Such predictions about future park use and enjoyment rely on broad insight about American society. A report from *American Demographics* provides a well-rounded and realistic set of predictions for the twenty-first century; they helped guide our work, and are summarized below.

1. *Everyone will belong to a minority group.* Whites will no longer be a majority group in several states (such as California); Asian and Hispanic populations will dramatically increase, with Hispanics outnumbering African-Americans by 2010. Politics will be altered; by 2000 most mayors in the nation's big cities will be people of color; racial-crossover voting will be common.

2. *The family will be redefined.* By 2000, over half the children in the United States will spend part of their lives in a single-parent household. Interracial marriage and adoption will increase. Nontraditional family arrangements—unmarried heterosexual couples, homosexual couples, and friends that live together—will gain legal recognition and social acceptance as families.
3. *Educational inequalities will increase.* Employment will require education beyond high school; the less-educated will be driven further into a cycle of poverty. The percentage of urbanites on welfare will continue to increase; semiskilled workers will be relatively scarce. For others, there will be an education revolution: children will learn by computer; the flow of electronic information will increase and diversify; adult education will grow.
4. *Full-time homemakers will approach extinction.* By 2000, more than 80 percent of adult women will be in the labor force, with most of the rest only temporarily unemployed. Women will make up close to half of the labor force, with employers dependent upon their skills. They will also remain responsible as the family's principal caretaker, and family stress is likely to rise.
5. *The retirement population will dramatically increase.* By 2009, the baby-boom generation will begin to retire, with consequences: 3.5 million Americans will retire that year, 63 percent more than in 1990. Half of Americans will be aged forty or older by 2015.
6. *Big cities face big challenges.* Population and jobs will continue to move from the urban centers, with corporate headquarters scattering. Southern and western cities will face growth crises, eastern and midwestern cities will face decline, and in all cities, the difficulty of governance and providing necessary services will increase.

What do these predictions mean for the National Park Service? First and foremost, they imply that the next twenty-five years of park use and enjoyment will see dramatic change. The aging and redistribution of the population suggests that significant shifts in visitation are likely: from eastern to western and southern parks, from summer to other seasons, from back country to front country areas. The trends in work and education imply that many visitors will have less time and more demand for information and unique experiences. Economic trends suggest that park-related tourism will grow as an important local industry, and that parks as

tools of economic development will have strong political support. Changes in American values imply an expanded role for parks in the life of the nation.

With these predictions, and with confidence that some will be borne out and others will not, we turn to a discussion of the major issues facing park use and enjoyment in the twenty-first century. The issues and recommendations are not listed in any order of priority, nor are they all necessarily of equal importance.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1

What should be the role of the National Park Service, both in American society and globally?

Background and Findings

This issue is one of mission and ideals, as the purpose and vision of the agency significantly influence how the parks will be used and enjoyed. Hence, it was a primary concern to our working group. Several critical questions emerge: What is a national park (and historic site, recreation area, battlefield) for? What is the future role(s) of the national park system in American culture, and in the world? Is the current mission of the National Park Service relevant to twenty-first-century America? What role should the National Park Service play in world affairs?

Historically, the rationale for national parks has included scenic nationalism (our mountains are better than Europe's), efficiency (wholesome recreation is necessary for worker productivity), economic benefit (the See America First! campaign of 1910); refreshment of the populace (Muir's "tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people" in need of wilderness), and public training (the environmental education programs of the early 1970s). Specific arguments have been made for natural areas (open space for urban populations, saving endangered species, wilderness, preserving ecosystems, and now conserving biodiversity) and for historic areas (preserving of native cultures, paying homage to the deserving, teaching military strategy, and economic revitalization through tourism). It is doubtful that additional rationales would add much that is significant.

The Organic Act establishing the National Park Service has likewise

been discussed in detail; often the strictures to "provide for the enjoyment" and "preserve unimpaired" have been treated as contradictory policy directives. Or, the debates have centered around which goal is primary, with each going in and out of fashion according to perceived political winds. The possibility that congressional intent (or inadvertent consequence) was to prevent purist preservationists or overzealous developers from dominating the agency, and to create a demanding balance of ideologies, is less explored but plausible. Lack of consensus may be inevitable and permanent.

Given the long litany of discussion, what can we add? We start from the point of view that the national park system is a major and unique contribution to the national culture and the heritage of mankind. We are a nation of many peoples and many points of view, with a democratic tradition and demographic trends that ensure cultural pluralism. From the Duwamish and Iroquois to German-Americans, African-Americans, Italian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans to the recent immigrants from Cambodia, we take pride in our individual heritages.

But we also have, in less than 250 years, created a unique and enduring national culture. The parks, historic sites, and recreation areas that make up the national park system are an integral part of this culture and our national identity. The Statue of Liberty and Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site are crucial to our image of ourselves, as is Yellowstone, Everglades, Yosemite, and Canyon de Chelly. Indeed, it may be that the essential purpose of the national parks is to help bind us together as Americans, to form a common heritage, both natural and cultural. And to the extent that the national park system reflects our unique national history (both environmental and social), it represents an important tool for other peoples of the world to understand us.

Hence, park use has meaning and purpose higher and apart from purely recreational, entertainment, or economic values. It is partly an act of nation building. This should not be confused with superficial patriotism or pridefulness; it is more meaningful and long term. The national park system has evolved into a superb inventory of what Americans value: the special landscapes and wildlife we clamor to see, the historical scenes and events that formed the national character (and characters), the diversity of peoples and cultures that shape our contemporary affairs. For example, over forty sites in the system preserve and interpret Native American cultures. Park use and enjoyment continually reaffirms the importance and vitality of these resources.

At the same time, the national parks are "pleasuring-grounds" (albeit of a special kind); whether it is a walk along the South Rim of the Grand Canyon or a meal at a concession or a tour of Thomas Edison's New Jersey home, public enjoyment is a traditional, legitimate, and important responsibility of the National Park Service. Few governmental agencies are charged with contributing to the nation's fun; it is an important task. We stress that to provide for pleasure and enjoyment does not imply that unchecked hedonism should guide visitors or the agency: to be a "pleasuring-ground" does not require that all pleasures be provided. The recreational activities afforded by the national park system must be carefully considered. Because each unit of the system has its own legal rationale and visitor use pattern, we caution against a single, general mission statement. Instead, we adhere to Darling and Eichorn's advice in *Man and Nature in the National Parks*; the question must be reframed and asked as: "What is this national park for?"

If each unit is a unique contribution to the system, then the system represents a unique collection of national heritage, a benchmark of who we are as a people. And since cultural diversity is our national experience (*E Pluribus Unum*: out of many, one), the national park system must be a collection of culturally diverse resources. The criterion for inclusion must be national significance, but of a special kind: the significance should relate to the building of a nation out of so many different peoples and environments. Yellowstone has this significance; so do Morristown and Chamizal and Mesa Verde and Haleakala. Our history is still unfolding; new contributions to the national experience are emerging. Our landscape is changing, rapidly; once-common scenes and resources will inevitably become worthy of preservation. Hence, the system must continue to grow (at what pace is debatable) or eventually lose its relevance as a record of our people and environment.

If the purpose of the system is to preserve the national heritage, does it follow that the National Park Service should restrict itself to the system's management? We suggest not, for several reasons. First, the interdependence of recreation resources makes such isolation impossible. Use and enjoyment of the national parks is intertwined with local, county, state, and other federal resources, and with local communities, tribal lands, regional landscapes, and private recreation facilities. Regardless of rhetoric, parks are not islands (they never were, ecologically or socioeconomically), and use of the national park system will be heavily influenced by management practices of other agencies and organizations. Second,

Mesa Verde National Park

the National Park Service has leadership responsibilities that transcend the land base of the agency, under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, the National Trail System Act, other broad federal laws and dozens of specific acts (such as the Michigan-Illinois Canal Heritage Corridor Act).

Third, the National Park Service has historically been looked to for counsel and assistance by many entities that provide for park use and en-

joyment. The abolition of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (after its evolution into the Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service) transferred significant tasks to the National Park Service, where this function has been largely de-emphasized or ignored. The Administration requested appropriations for state assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund only once (fiscal 1992) since 1981. Public Law 88-29 requires the secretary of interior at five year intervals to present to the Congress a nationwide recreation plan; the last was submitted in 1979. Ironically, this lack of significant action is coincident with the Congress and other interest groups demanding greater assistance efforts by the agency. There is disagreement (including within our working group and among participants at the Symposium) as to whether these programs should be reemphasized in the National Park Service or given a new institutional framework outside the agency. There is strong agreement that such functions are critical to the future of outdoor recreation in the United States.

Fourth, viable alternatives to direct ownership and management of land by the National Park Service have historically been experimented with (an example is the 1930s National Recreation Demonstration Areas) and in the 1980s emerged as important strategies for providing needed resources for park use and enjoyment. There are numerous examples of "affiliated" NPS areas (for example, National Heritage Corridors). Most include substantial private ownership of resources, land use regulatory mechanisms, incentives, and economic revitalization as key components. The NPS involvement in these "partnership parks" involves varying degrees of technical assistance, grant programs, operational staffing, land acquisition, and capital development funding. They represent important alternatives to traditional "own and manage" approaches. Future expansion of the national park system will, by necessity, often involve the creation of units that are partnership parks.

Finally, the U.S. National Park Service has an important role in the world park movement and international conservation. At one time, our approach to park management was the example for other countries to emulate. While it is no longer the only model (we think this is a valuable maturing of the park movement globally), the National Park Service has the opportunity and responsibility to be a leader in international park affairs. Our parks have a long history of serving as classrooms for park managers from around the world. Many NPS employees have international experience or would like to; such experience improves their abilities to

manage parks in this country. The National Park Service has an active international technical assistance program; such assistance is often used as an instrument of foreign policy through the Agency for International Development.

In addition, the United States is a signatory of many international conservation agreements such as the World Heritage Convention, and the National Park Service manages several international biosphere reserves. Importantly, the agency cannot manage park use and enjoyment of certain domestic resources without international cooperation (an example is the Big Bend ecosystem). As the slogan "think globally, act locally" moves from environmental rhetoric to government policy, and as the American public increasingly understands the implications of global interdependence, leadership in international affairs will grow as a necessary responsibility of the National Park Service. We believe the service can directly benefit from such involvement, for there is much to learn from the park managers and institutions of other nations.

Recommendations

We recommend that the National Park Service recognize the preservation and interpretation of cultural diversity to be significant criteria in the acquisition of new historic and cultural sites and the management of existing sites. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service should continue to revise its list of "cultural themes" to reflect more accurately the breadth of American culture, with advice from the public and professionals outside the agency.
2. Individual units of the system should be encouraged to widely publicize their unique purpose to employees (through additional training), local populations (through local media and schools), and visitors (through interpretive programs).
3. New area studies by the Service that deal with cultural and historic properties should include careful assessment of national significance and the need for cultural diversity in the national park system.

We recommend that the National Park Service strengthen and expand its program of technical assistance to meet visitor needs for natural, scenic, recreational, cultural, and historic experiences outside the boundaries of

the national park system. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service should use its existing authority and resources to reorganize its technical assistance programs into a more coherent, efficient, and influential enterprise. It should include technical assistance, partnership-brokering, consulting, and transitional period management.
2. Emphasis should be on creating a highly visible and efficient program that is accessible to local governments and citizens, treats regional land management as a partnership, is state-of-the-art in both concepts and technologies, and proactive rather than reactive.

We recommend the National Park Service embrace the concept of "partnership parks." Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The purpose of these areas should be to preserve, protect, and develop the full potential of areas of national significance through cooperative involvement of public and private sectors.
2. The Service should develop an organizational strategy to provide input to Congress on evaluating proposals for establishing such areas and recognize that partnership parks represent an important component of the future national park system.

We recommend that the National Park Service fully implement existing legislative mandates under Public Law 88-29; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act; the Urban Parks and Recreation Resources Act and related statutes, or propose that these responsibilities be transferred to another entity. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service should prepare, as soon as possible, a five-year national outdoor recreation plan as required by the Land and Water Conservation Act.
2. The Service, working with interest groups, recreation professionals, and other federal agencies, should assess its commitment and competence to carry out the necessary assistance activities required by current statute. This assessment should include a clear recommendation as to the future of these activities, and if it is the intention of the National Park Service to retain them, a plan of action to improve their performance.

The National Park Service should reinforce its role as a world leader in the national park movement through agreements and actions to facilitate the exchange of information, development of environmental strategies, and protection of critical world resources. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service should fully participate in international activities and programs that involve or lead to protecting the world's natural and cultural heritage. This should include an expanded role for scientific activities (such as research, data sharing, and training) in NPS international exchange programs.
2. The Service should identify those domestic resources that require international cooperation for effective management, protection, and interpretation and implement international strategies to manage, protect, and interpret such resources.
3. The Service should exchange with interested parties around the world, information, methods, and technology to conserve, interpret, and manage protected areas. The agency should implement a strategy that relates the results of international cooperation to the domestic missions of the Service and its allied organizations.

Issue 2

How will the national park system be used and enjoyed?

Background and Findings

Park use is not static—and as it changes, so too must the service, concessioners, gateway communities, and visitors themselves. Several critical questions must be addressed: Who will use the national parks, and why? Who will not use the parks, and why not? How should the National Park Service provide opportunities for unique park experiences? What visitor activities are appropriate and what are not? How should the Service define needed visitor services, and how can these services best be provided?

While visitors will likely have less time for leisure, and visits will continue their fifty-year trend of becoming shorter in length, many NPS employees and other park professionals decry the change and argue that

national parks must be experienced at a pace appropriate to the 1880s. Such arguments are nostalgic and unproductive: the diversity of visitors will require the National Park Service to provide opportunities to both the hurried and the leisurely visitor.

Of equal concern is the fact that the ownership of the national park system extends to those citizens will not or cannot use the national parks. A sizable portion of Americans have never visited a national park (by the Citibank-sponsored study's estimate, 32 percent); even fewer do so on a regular basis. Some citizens do not visit because NPS sites have little meaning or interest to them; in a way this is a failure of the Service and related organizations to communicate the breadth and value of the national park system. Some do not visit because they are unaware of what resources they co-own as citizens; again this is partly a failure of communication.

A sizable portion (how large is difficult to estimate) cannot visit the parks: the prerequisites for visiting most NPS areas include private transportation, free time, discretionary income and good health. Other than a few urban recreation areas and numerous cultural sites, many national parks are at present de facto out-of bounds for Americans in or near poverty. The solution—a significant improvement of the economic, social and physical health of the nation's poor and near-poor—is beyond the scope of the National Park Service.

The challenge is to articulate what responsibility the agency has to enfranchise nonvisitors, to find ways that the national parks can become meaningful to those that do not enter them. Not all park use and enjoyment requires a visit. As Costa Dillon, an NPS interpreter, recently wrote:

> If you decide to decorate your apartment in Iowa with an Elliot Porter photograph of Great Sand Dunes National Monument, are you not enjoying the park?

Park use and enjoyment must be broadly defined, and the role of the national park system in our national culture must be expanded.

For those citizens that do come for a visit, what will and should they find? Perhaps no term has been more loosely used in park management than "the park experience." Scientific evidence is largely limited to white, middle-class outdoor enthusiasts, managers' definitions are largely based upon their personal beliefs, and the tourism industry focuses on

that part of the visitor's stay that can return a reasonable profit. The diversity of visitors makes it unlikely that there can be *the* park experience: can a fourteen-year-old girl from Idaho experience Pearl Harbor like a seventy-year-old veteran of the attack? And why should she be expected to? It is one thing for managers to provide a planned spectrum of recreation opportunities (say, from concession lodging to wilderness campsites); it is another to attempt to socially engineer the emotional reactions of the citizenry to the resources of their parks.

At the same time, and because of the uniqueness of each unit of the national park system, a visit to a national park should not be simply one more entertainment or common recreation. Each unit of the national park system has the potential to provide visitors a unique experience, without surrogate or substitute. There is no substitute for Gettysburg or Wupatki or Ford's Theater or Bryce Canyon. The challenge is to emphasize each area's uniqueness; the guiding principle is to do nothing to dilute the special qualities of that particular site.

Activities must be compatible with park resources. To manage this way implies that activities appropriate at one location may be inappropriate at another; what is appropriate in a recreation area may be inappropriate in a wilderness area. Likewise, it is inappropriate to impose wilderness criteria upon nonwilderness units: to do so is elitist and ignorant of resources and the democratic role of the national parks. Managing properly is a difficult challenge, and will sharpen as the demand for allowing nontraditional uses increases (often by those that would profit, rather than from visitors themselves).

Park and recreation design in general is problematic, and results vary; it is one of the few design fields today where the clients (who are actually visitors, not park managers) are seldom directly involved in the design process. Special populations (senior citizens, international visitors, the disabled) are not consistently served. Facilities are sometimes inappropriate for their location, function, or both. Of critical importance is the "front country" (the developed portion of parks must be accessible to general visitors) of NPS units. It is there, we argue, that the pressures will be most intense, park values most under threat, and the need for preparation most important. Preparation does not imply overdevelopment, but rather innovative design, sound maintenance, careful retrofitting, and visitor management.

Inflexible standards and management approaches will do little good

and much harm; the principle of protecting each park's uniqueness can and should be applied. For example, facilities like gas stations and grocery stores may be necessary to park use and enjoyment; it does not follow that these facilities must be inside a park. Convenience and profit are legitimate concerns in development of park concession facilities, but they are not sufficient rationale for providing services and facilities within parks. Reasonable standards can be developed and applied; key criteria include sustainability, a lack of adverse environmental impact, and an emphasis on basic and needed services. The same principle should be applied to employee housing, recreation areas, staff parking lots, and so forth.

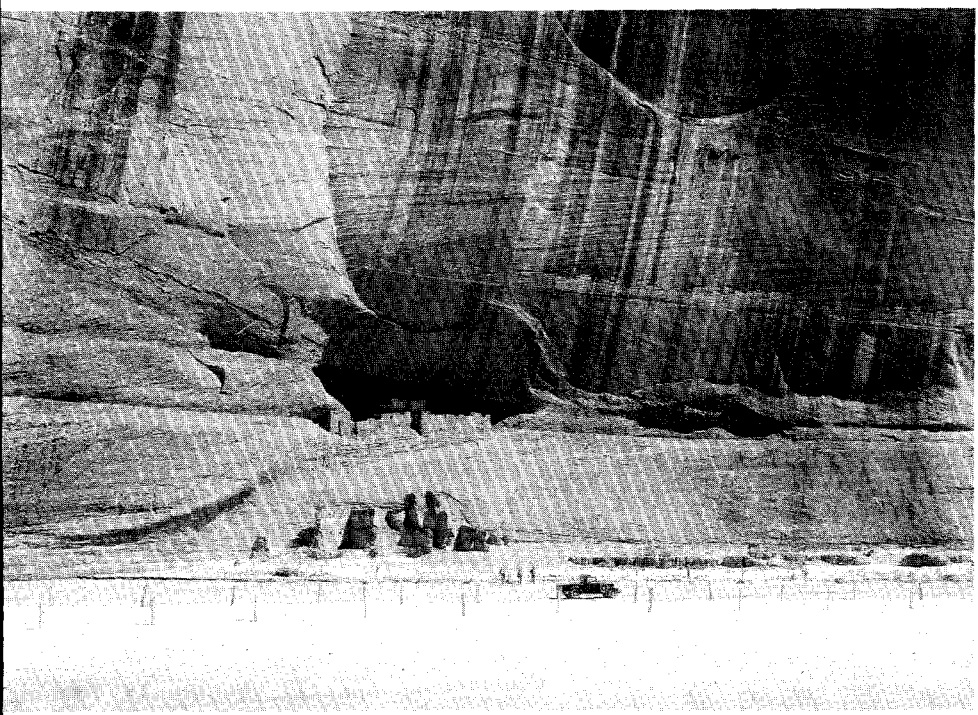
Recommendations

We recommend the National Park Service broadly communicate the breadth and value of the national park system. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. Inventories of the system should be kept up-to-date and widely distributed.
2. A tourist information database should be established whereby the tourist industry and the general public can easily and inexpensively access information about the entire system and individual parks.
3. Nongovernmental organizations related to the Service should actively support the development of additional guidebooks and other media (print, film, and especially television) that emphasize different aspects of the system (desert parks, Civil War sites, wilderness areas, presidential homes, and so forth).
4. The full range of park values, including visitor enjoyment, resource preservation, and ecological and/or historical importance should be communicated to park visitors and the general public.

We recommend that the National Park Service embark on an innovative program of facility planning, design, and maintenance to prepare the "front country" of each park for visitor needs, while protecting the unique features of each park. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service should undertake to develop a new generation of state-of-the-art designs for needed facilities such as trails, overlooks, transportation systems, visitor centers, and campgrounds.



Canyon de Chelly National Monument

2. Such designs should be based on the unique values of each site, sustainable and wise use of resources, visitor needs, and a full accounting of environmental impacts.
3. Construction and operational impacts should be reduced to minimal levels. The objective should be to design facilities such that visitors to the front country of a park can gain an appreciation of the area's unique values. For natural areas, this means a glimpse of the "back country" such that further exploration is encouraged. For historic areas, it means access to historic features that help visitors understand the significance of the entire site.
4. NPS planners and designers, in cooperation with field employees, concessioners and cooperating associations, should develop a state-of-the-art, visitor-based, sustainable use design.
5. Demonstration projects at selected parks should be undertaken, evaluated by those that use the facility (i.e., NPS employees, con-

cessioners, cooperating associations, and visitors), refined, and applied to additional areas in the system.

We recommend that the National Park Service minimize development of visitor facilities within park boundaries, while striving for excellence in visitor services. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. In all instances, the protection of each park's unique values should be the determining factor in development decisions.
2. The standard of *necessity* should be flexibly applied at each park through a revision of the current planning process, and the determination of need should include significant public involvement.
3. The Service should use existing authority to remove, whenever possible, unnecessary facilities.
4. General management plans should be kept current.
5. Visitors should be informed of the need for and availability of gateway services; so should employees.

We recommend that the National Park Service develop a technical assistance program aimed specifically at gateway communities and regions linked to national park system areas. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service should encourage the development of private sector visitor services in the gateway communities, so as to contribute to local economic development, encourage competition, increase choices for visitors, and minimize the need for in-park facilities.
2. The Service should encourage and assist local governments in long-term land use planning and sustainable economic development at ecosystem, landscape, and regional scales.
3. An interdisciplinary team—including development specialists and economists from other relevant federal agencies—should be assembled, and demonstration projects should be undertaken near several parks. These pilot projects should be monitored, evaluated by both the Service and the local communities, refined, and expanded to other areas in the system.
4. Where needed, new legislative authorities should be sought to enable the Service to be effective in this role.

We recommend that the National Park Service take prompt action to develop visitor transportation systems in parks where resource protection and enhancement of the visitor experience can be achieved. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service should quickly inventory the public transportation systems currently available in parks and the priority needs for additional systems. Evaluation of existing systems by users (visitors) should be conducted, and the results used in transportation planning.
2. In cooperation with transportation officials, concessioners, the tourism industry, interest groups, and gateway communities, the Service should design innovative transportation alternatives and implement them in the high priority areas identified in the transportation inventory.
3. Where possible, such in-park transportation systems should be linked with public transportation to parks, through cooperation with public transportation agencies and gateway communities.

Issue 3

How should the National Park Service interpret the national park system and educate the public, and for what purpose?

Background and Findings

The National Park Service's responsibility for the nation's heritage extends beyond protection and management; it includes the interpretation of what these resources mean and education as to their proper use and preservation. Interpretation has always played an important role in park use and enjoyment. The evolution, growth, and development of NPS interpretation has been one of the most significant contributions that the agency has made in the world park movement, and excellent programs exist throughout the national park system. Yet the goals of the Service's interpretation activity are less clear. The issue of what and how to interpret is current and controversial, as the believers in cultural diversity and cultural unity now confront each other in the fields of education, history, and natural science. The Service must enter this debate, as it is responsible for much of the nation's natural and cultural heritage. It is also a practical

issue: how best can interpretive and educational material be delivered? To whom? Who should be responsible? What criteria can we use to judge success?

Interpretation has historically been treated as a secondary task by the agency and many individual park managers; it has been viewed as a specialized activity of certain employees and not others. This attitude is short-sighted, ineffective, and to the extent that it prevents the public from fully understanding their resources, undemocratic. When a visitor looks for directional signs and cannot find them, asks for a brochure and map and does not receive one, tries to find a park ranger and cannot locate one, the Service has failed.

Use and enjoyment of national parks must include a basic level of interpretation and/or education. To the visitor, all park staff and concession employees are potential interpreters. Visitors desire more information, and informed visitors are more likely to practice good resource stewardship. The unique significance of each site (including its relationship to the visitor's personal experience and the nation building described earlier) is a necessary and basic theme. We consider basic interpretation (that which describes the unique significance of the site) an essential component of park use and enjoyment, equal in importance to resource management. The Service must commit itself to offering visitors basic interpretive services. It should strive to offer far more.

Much of the interpretive activity in the Service is imaginatively conceived and well-appreciated by visitors. At the same time, quality varies widely. Many programs are offered with little concern for cost versus benefit; interpreters often choose media, program content, time, and location for management convenience rather than for meeting visitor needs. Appropriate technologies (desktop publishing, park newspapers, dioramas, park radio stations, relief maps) are often underused. There is a backlog of antiquated exhibitry and film largely unchanged in style and delivery since the 1950s (this in the MTV age!). It is no wonder that the private sector, more willing to market interpretation as a profitable visitor service, has increasingly filled the demand for information. An example is the growth of video products related to the national parks. The private sector and particularly concessions have a legitimate, productive role to play in educating park visitors, and their involvement should be encouraged. Some in our working group (and at the Symposium) believe it should be required.

As educational resources, the national park system is a premier na-

tional education system. Many Americans learn their history from visiting parks. History, geography, art, science can all be taught using the national park system: a school child in Nebraska or West Miami learning about the American Revolution needs to learn that Bunker Hill is very real, that it has been preserved for her to visit and personally experience, and that she will then be responsible for passing on this heritage to the generations that follow. Yet the integration of the national parks and educational system (including primary, secondary, and college levels) is incomplete. Educational outreach programs are in some parks intensively and productively being pursued (Gateway and Everglades are examples; so is the recent development of a National Park Service/National Parks and Conservation Association biodiversity curriculum). In too many others this activity is ignored or unfunded. Regional offices of the National Park Service have great potential in coordinating such outreach, but the potential is not fully employed. Other organizations (cooperating associations, friends' groups, private philanthropies, teachers' groups) could also play a major role in public education using the parks.

Finally, the National Park Service finds itself directly in the middle of a major intellectual debate concerning education and public history. Beginning in the 1960s (primarily with the Black Power movement), the dominant vision of America as a melting pot of peoples gave way to the realization that ethnic heritage and national culture are not mutually exclusive. The idea that a single "Truth" exists regarding historical and environmental events has been critically challenged. There is now black history, feminist history, and so forth, to compete with traditional interpretations. An example is the reinterpretation of Columbus, his monumental discovery of the New World, and the quincentenary celebration. The Service was involved: thirty-nine sites in the system are "quincentenary parks" related to the event. Yet, to some Americans, his real name was Colón, the discovery was actually an encounter of disastrous consequences, and there was little to celebrate.

The National Park Service will increasingly be drawn into such debates over how to interpret the past. What should be its response? Should it attempt to provide a singular interpretation of an event or location—be it Ellis Island or Custer's Battlefield or the Yellowstone fires—or should it provide a range of histories and points of view, confronting the visitor with a set of choices? We consider this a significant question; we have no satisfactory answer. We do believe that the Service cannot and should not attempt to be the official arbiter of American cultural and natural history.

Recommendations

We recommend that the National Park Service commit its resources to offering all visitors basic interpretation including a general orientation to the site and insight into its unique features and significance. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. Where existing resources do not allow this commitment to be fulfilled, the interpretive staff and budgets should be increased.
2. Interpretive themes should be carefully scrutinized by park staff and directly related to the unique features and significance of each site.
3. All park, concession, and cooperating association employees should receive basic interpretive training.
4. All visitors should receive a park map and brochure when entering any area of the national park system, and these excellent interpretive tools should be further improved.
5. The Service should increase its work with appropriate and new communication technologies, using pilot projects to demonstrate effectiveness.
6. The Service should use partners (cooperating associations, advocacy groups, concessions, schools, the media) to assist in delivery of interpretive messages to wide and diverse audiences. Statutory restraints that limit such partnerships should be relaxed.
7. All programs should be carefully evaluated and the evaluations used to improve services.

We recommend that the National Park Service embark on an innovative program of educational and informational outreach, serving existing and potential visitors, as well as citizens that do not visit the parks. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service should revise its philosophy, policy, and management approaches to reflect the legitimate role the agency has as a national public education system.
2. The agency should develop ways to learn from and cooperate with the modern communications industry in order to increase its use of technologies and delivery systems appropriate to its educational mission now and in the future.
3. The Service should cooperate with other organizations in devel-

oping a complete K–12 curriculum for school teachers to integrate the national parks into the classroom.

4. The Service should encourage the production of video, film, radio and television programs related to the national parks, and their distribution nationwide.

We recommend that the National Park Service encourage managers and interpreters to better interpret controversial events and sites and incorporate multiple points of view into interpretive programs. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The examination of controversial events should be on a site-by-site basis. Methods might include local conferences, public hearings, and experimental interpretive programs.
2. Participants should include both mainstream and radical historians, natural scientists, public educators, park superintendents, and field interpreters.
3. The consequences of revisionist history and public controversy over environmental issues should be thoughtfully considered.
4. This ongoing activity should result in the preparation of a policy statement, flexible guidelines, and useful training materials.

Issue 4

How will park use and enjoyment impact natural and cultural resources, and what should be done about these impacts?

Background and Findings

Park use does not occur in a vacuum—it has effects upon the very resources visitors come to use and enjoy. We realize that the impacts of park use and enjoyment are varied from park to park, season to season, day to day, and site to site. Hence, we frame our questions cautiously: To what degree are the parks adversely impacted by park use? And what should be done about these impacts?

All human activity has environmental impacts; our use of energy, land, water, and resources inevitably changes the world around us. Eco-

logical change is a necessary by-product of park use. To demand that human impacts upon the parks be negligible is to reserve the parks for scientific study only, an action that is unacceptable. In addition, few, if any, parks are insular; most park ecosystems are linked to human systems through an intricate set of biophysical pathways including watersheds, airsheds, transition zones, migratory routes, and so forth. And, of course, visitors are likely to impact one another as part of these human ecosystems.

Hence, there is little question that park use and enjoyment impacts park resources, both natural and cultural. The research literature confirms the obvious through a series of detailed case studies, primarily of back country use and its impact upon "pristine" habitats. Studies of front country impacts are rare, comparative data across parks (such as the 1980 State of the Parks Report) are superficial, and a sustained research program on visitor impacts has not been accomplished. The National Park Service does not have a reliable knowledge base, and the extent of impacts caused by visitor use and enjoyment (except in occasional cases) cannot be determined. The impact of automobiles (air and noise pollution, acreage for roads, gasoline stations) may be more significant than the impact of visitors themselves. This suggests the importance of including transportation systems (current and alternative) in any analysis. In short, park managers and scientists do not fully understand the resiliency of park ecosystems as they respond to visitor use.

This has not dissuaded the press, both national and international, from treating the issue as newsworthy, and a torrent of newspaper articles appeared in the anniversary year 1991 that repeat the theme of Robert Cahn's 1969 Pulitzer Prize–winning series: Will success spoil the national parks? The rhetoric, often inflamed by park professionals themselves, includes "loving the parks to death," "gridlock in our national parks" and "trampling the nation's back yard." Most of the articles cite visitor statistics (often collected in such form as "visitor days"), then a few examples ("4 million tourists jam Acadia's 27 miles of road yearly"), and then quote park managers as being frustrated by the situation. In most cases, overcrowding is seen as a major cause of visitor impacts, along with the effects of new recreation technologies (climbing equipment, mountain bikes, snowmobiles, and so forth).

The National Park Service has a real and pressing responsibility to document and then communicate the reality of current park use and its

effects upon park ecosystems. There are parks that are overcrowded, ecosystems that are being irreparably harmed by use and overuse, and cultural resources being damaged by visitation. Such impacts must be dealt with, as they threaten the very purpose of these parks. But there is no evidence that the national park system is being overused, that visitors are the major cause of a general decline in park values (activities outside parks are often the real issue), that "the park experience" is no longer possible in most parks. Many parks are underused (a situation perhaps worthy of investigation); many parts of even the most heavily visited parks have low densities of visitors, and the system continues to slowly expand its offerings. Most visitors enjoy and appreciate their experiences. Some find their visit impacted by other visitors. Effective management of harmful situations will require a factual understanding of the real scope of the problem and honest communication of the challenges to the American public.

While the scope of the problem has not been carefully documented, possible solutions have been developed and implemented on a sporadic and often successful basis. The academic community has offered the concept of "carrying capacity"; the National Parks and Conservation Association's contribution is its "visitor impact management" technique; the U.S. Forest Service has developed and widely implemented a technique to establish "limits of acceptable change" and a "recreation opportunity spectrum." Many parks have established de facto carrying capacities through the manipulation of tickets, reservations, public transportation, and visitor services. The redistribution of visitors (to other locales, seasons, parks) has been attempted primarily through the back country permit system, which has been well accepted by visitors. The rationale of concentrating use to protect larger ecosystems has been considered unacceptable, though in practice it is routinely applied (such as roads, boardwalks, and campgrounds).

Most of the techniques and approaches available for adoption were designed for back country locations in the mountain habitats of western parks or along rivers; their application to front country areas, historical and urban parks, and the humid, deciduous forests of the East and South must be established through trial and evaluation. In particular, knowledge of "social carrying capacity" (the impact of visitor densities upon the experiences of other visitors) must be cautiously generalized; studies of river rafters and backpackers may not apply to front country or urban park users. Techniques for redistribution of large numbers of tourists (by edu-

cation, transportation systems, or incentive) have not been systematically pursued; their value in reducing real problems of crowding and impact is therefore uncertain.

Finally, visitor impacts not only reflect the number of tourists that enter an area, but the demands they place upon critical ecosystem functions (water, air, soil, and so forth). That is, per capita demand for potable water in arid parks may be as important as the overall number of users. Reduction of resource demands (through education, conservation, public transportation, recycling, and state-of-the-art technologies) could provide significant relief to overburdened ecosystems, though the scale of reduction is difficult to measure. Conservation gains during the energy crises of the 1970s suggest the benefits could be significant. Park going should be made as environmentally efficient as possible, and visitors encouraged to minimize their resource demands. To succeed, the National Park Service, its concessioners, and other partners will have to lead by education, enforcement, and example.

Recommendations

We recommend that the National Park Service undertake a systemwide analysis of visitor-use impacts upon park resources and on the experiences of other visitors, including a careful documentation of crowding conditions in the parks. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The Service is developing a useful Geographic Information System capability; it should be applied in this effort through the mapping of visitor density levels and suitability studies.
2. The analysis should be interdisciplinary, include social and physical carrying capacity, consider cultural, historic, and natural areas (including wilderness), and be widely reported to park professionals and the general public.
3. The results should be used to target further documentation for areas identified as particularly threatened, as an indicator of management change, and a tool for the public in selecting sites to visit.

We recommend that the National Park Service undertake a program of trials, where different techniques for minimizing visitor impacts are applied and evaluated and the results communicated to managers. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. There are many techniques available; what is needed is a series of carefully monitored field trials where their real-world effectiveness can be examined and compared. Particular attention should be paid to evaluating techniques for redistributing visitors, reservation systems, public transportation, and limitation of entry.
2. These trials should be undertaken at parks identified in the analysis described above, and the successful (that is effective and practical techniques) should be implemented on a flexible and as-needed basis throughout the national park system.
3. Training on visitor impact management should be increased for both resource management specialists and superintendents. This training should include the results of the above trials, and include a significant effort to transfer successful visitor management techniques from the pilot test parks to additional areas that have visitor impact problems.

We recommend that the National Park Service, its concessioners, and its other partners develop an educational program that encourages visitors to minimize resource demands. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The program's focus should be voluntary compliance, and its design should involve NPS professionals, concessioners, and the tourism industry.
2. Visitors should be informed as to the value of reduced resource use, and opportunities for their participation (such as the recycling programs now underway) should be made convenient and widespread.
3. The agency, its concessioners, and other partners should lead by example, and the Service should prepare an inventory of state-of-the-art technologies (from low-water toilets to recycled paper products) for use in NPS areas and gateway communities.
4. Incentives (such as preferential treatment of recycled products in purchasing), challenge grants and special contracts should be considered as valuable approaches.
5. Successful results should be communicated throughout the agency and the public kept fully informed.

Issue 5

How can the National Park Service make wise decisions regarding park use and enjoyment in the future?

Background and Findings

The decision-making process within the National Park Service is a critical and appropriate concern for several of the working groups. We asked several key questions specifically related to visitor use and enjoyment: How can the Service best learn about visitors (new and prospective) and then integrate this knowledge into all aspects of its operation? What process(es) should the National Park Service use to continually prepare itself to serve future visitors? And more broadly, how can NPS decision makers be equipped to manage for uncertainty and change?

The National Park Service continually makes decisions that affect visitor use and enjoyment: approving concession prices, designing an interpretive program, modernizing a visitor center, establishing a shuttle system, approving a special use permit. Throughout this report we have expressed a guiding principle for making such decisions: provide for visitors' needs, yet do nothing that would harm the unique significance of each park. A process for making such decisions is equally necessary.

Historically, NPS professionals made many of the major policy decisions in consultation with the administration, Congress, and special interest groups; specific, local and technical decisions were left to the professionals in the agency. Beginning with National Environmental Policy Act in the late 1960s, there has been a steady increase in the legislative requirements for public involvement in resource management decisions. For example, each amendment to the Endangered Species Act has included additional opportunities for public comment and scrutiny. No federal agency is immune from this trend, and there is no evidence that the public's demand (and Congress's insistence) for involvement will wane.

Agencies like the National Park Service will increase their shared decision making with the public (often represented by special interest groups), either willingly or by legal and political coercion. The surrender of decision-making power is inevitable. For an agency composed of professionals with large enthusiasms and high ideals, this transfer of power will be painful, difficult, and often denied; many park managers view the resource base as their client rather than society, and would prefer to make

decisions about resources with little interference from the public that owns them. There currently is significant and valuable public involvement in NPS decision making, yet trends in American resource politics suggest even more will be required. Our working group is unsure and divided as to what actions should be taken in response to this trend. Symposium participants and public comments suggested that there is already too much public involvement in NPS decision making.

The National Park Service's ability to manage effectively is diminished by its lack of systematic knowledge about visitors, and almost all internal and external studies of the agency in recent years have called for an expanded social science program. Institutional memory is weak: the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission report of 1963 was a landmark in understanding visitors; the Service had a pioneering social science program in the 1970s, and efforts like the Visitor Services Project have produced detailed visitor information for selected parks. Yet current efforts have a narrow and constrained focus, and are pigeon-holed outside the agency's science program. It is vital to integrate social science into the Service's current natural resource science program. Such integration has several benefits: improved interdisciplinary capabilities for dealing with park problems that are social and biological (visitor impacts is an example), an improvement in technical exchange among scientists (the use of the Geographic Information System for ecological and socioeconomic monitoring is an example), improved and streamlined administration, and the development of a broad-based, nationally recognized science program within the Service.

Gaining information about visitors is one challenge; integrating this knowledge into the agency's operation is equally important. Yet, design of facilities occurs with almost no data about potential users; interpretive programs are conducted with little systematic feedback from audiences, and policy decisions are made in Washington with no special analysis of social or economic impacts upon park user groups and local communities. Encouragingly, training programs are including "understanding visitors" as a topic, and most park superintendents have realized the advantages that up-to-date visitor information can provide. Ironically, it is the private sector and concessioners that lead in gathering and using such information; it is treated as a necessary marketing tool and a wise investment.

Effective public involvement and careful monitoring of visitor feed-

back are important to wise decisions regarding park use and enjoyment, but decisions made in the context of too few resources (human and financial) are unlikely to be successfully enacted. For example, improved interpretation will require increased recruiting and retention of professional employees, and an increase in staffing levels at some parks.

Meeting the legitimate needs of tomorrow's park users will require increases in the quantity and the quality of some park services and facilities, such as interpretation and visitor centers. These expansions and enhancements, in turn, will require additional funds. In general, park users today receive good value for any direct costs they encounter through entrance fees, fees for specialized services and facilities such as campsites, and indirect fees collected on operations of concessioners. Evidence is strong that park users are willing to pay for continued and improved park opportunities (the Citibank public survey described earlier is an example). Some working group members and symposium participants felt that expanded reliance upon a "user-pays" philosophy should be pursued; others disagreed except for special events and services. Equity concerns (differential impacts upon rich and poor) must be addressed.

Improved operational efficiencies can range from savings in energy use to cost sharing of interpreters with local tourism interests to cooperating with other organizations on training, design, and procurement. Systemwide fee changes deserve careful review, ranging from entry-fee price changes to concessioner and cooperating association payments. Even more important is local flexibility to recover visitor program costs.

Finally, it is vital that Congress appropriate, and the administration expend, the necessary funds for meeting the commitments of the agency. Numerous public opinion polls show that the citizenry strongly support use of additional tax dollars for operating the national park system.

Recommendations

We recommend that the National Park Service establish a task force to improve the public involvement process within the agency. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The task force should include public involvement specialists from the Service and other agencies as well as representatives of interest groups.

2. Its attention should extend beyond the minimum involvement required by law and include an analysis of successful techniques that could be applied to the Service.
3. The task force should prepare recommendations for improving the use of public involvement in management decisions.

We recommend that the National Park Service develop an expanded social science capability and integrate it into the agency's natural science program. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. The NPS social science program should include visitor studies, evaluation of visitor services, trend monitoring, economic analysis, and basic research on park use.
2. The program should be integrated into the existing natural science program so that social and biological research programs operate together within a single scientific division of the agency.
3. The program should be closely coordinated with similar efforts by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state parks, and other organizations (including the private sector) that conduct outdoor recreation and tourism industry research. A combination of park-level, regional, and Washington-office–directed efforts should be supported.
4. Funding should focus on research and monitoring that produces "usable knowledge" for park managers, and the results widely communicated through scientific journals, professional meetings, and employee training.

We recommend that the National Park Service and its partners act to increase the financial and human resources available to the agency in order to better serve the public. Steps to implement this recommendation are:

1. Realistic budgets that support the commitments of the agency should be presented to Congress. These should include both necessary funds and positions to fulfill the agency's responsibilities.
2. Increasing the available resources for park user services can be partially accomplished through a mixture of creative partnerships, improved operational efficiencies in parks and administrative offices, systemwide fee actions, and new, localized flexibility in recovering visitor use program costs.

CONCLUSION

We have presented in this report five issues we think are the core of challenges facing the National Park Service as it serves park use and enjoyment, in this anniversary year and in the future. Yet, a report is merely paper if it does not inspire action. Of special importance is the need to prioritize needs and available resources, to answer carefully the question: What must first be done? We urge the National Park Service and its partners to vigorously pursue a strategy of action that converts the opportunities described in our report into significant achievements.

In 1909, Allen Chamberlain of the Appalachian Mountain Club wrote a reply to an article about visitors to the national parks. He stated his case matter-of-factly:

> . . . if the public could be induced to visit these scenic treasure-houses, they would soon come to appreciate their value and stand firmly in their defense (1901:1).

The first seventy-five years saw the building of a great and wondrous national park system; the next seventy-five will witness its maturation or diminution. Those who work with and care deeply about the parks should prepare themselves: no Stephen Mather will "come on down to Washington and run them himself," the Alaskan expansion will not be repeated, the insular esprit de corps of the old-time National Park Service can only be replaced with a new modern spirit. The challenges (and opportunities) that face the Service in the twenty-first century, now so close, will reflect that age and not another.

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5

Environmental Leadership

Introduction

The idea of a national park system resulted from an intuition by the American people that, in time, population and industrial growth would make it important to have preserved those places which represent the soul of this nation. The national park system has been of immeasurable value in providing unique recreational and educational experiences for millions of visitors each year. This system is now threatened by incompatible development along its boundaries and an absence of leadership at all levels of the Service. In its seventy-fifth anniversary year, the National Park Service needs to be able to respond to these threats by reversing this trend and reasserting its rightful role as the leader in protecting America's heritage.

When the first national parks were established, they were vast and isolated places, virtually untouched by the march of settlement that was transforming the North American landscape. At that time, nothing more seemed necessary than to reserve the land from ordinary use and habitation and to appoint custodians. Visitors were few and posed little threat to the wonders the parks enclosed. The world has now closed in on the parks. Development has reached the borders of even the most remote places. Tourism has become a massive enterprise. Newer park units are located at the edges or even within major cities, while most every park unit is exposed to the environmental hazards of a modern industrialized society.

The portfolio of the National Park Service has expanded continually over the past several decades. Today, there are 359 parks representing

Everglades National Park

sixteen categories of units within the national park system—ranging from national battlefields to scenic rivers to national historic sites. Concomitantly, the role of parks is perceived differently by various segments of the population. This is not surprising, since the portfolio of parks is constructed to serve many different purposes. To campers or backpackers, the parks are areas of magnificent natural beauty. To urban residents, they are valuable places for recreation and education. To tourists and sightseers, they are landmarks representing the history of the country and the culture of our diverse society. To preservationists, they represent islands of wilderness. To some communities, they are the attraction which fuels the local economy.

Each of these groups measures the Service's performance based on that aspect of the park system that has value to them. Few either under-

stand or care that the Service's mission is much broader. Appreciation of the multifaceted mandate of the Service is essential, if one is to effectively define what it means to be a leader within this agency. Under the best of circumstances, leadership of an organization with such diverse responsibilities is a challenging task. But unfortunately the best of circumstances are not what face the Service today. Money is tight as the federal government grapples with continuing budget deficits. Fiscal crises are often even more pronounced at the state and local levels. At the same time, the Congress faces growing pressure to expand the National Park Service's mandate to include regional economic development. Both branches have demonstrated a willingness to earmark funds for new initiatives, but a reluctance to appropriate funds sufficient to cover general operating expenses. As a result, Park programs ranging from interpretation to basic operations and maintenance are underfunded, and state partnership programs such as the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and the state grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund have been so reduced in size that they are only marginally effective.

Confrontational policies of the early 1980s have left in their wake disincentives and obstacles to asserting leadership. During this era, the historical ties between NPS people in the field, the director, and the Department of the Interior, as well as the working relationship between Congress and the Service were severely strained.

At one point in time, for example, park officials were constrained from operating outside of their boundaries, making it difficult to establish strong and cooperative relationships with neighboring communities. This policy also all but prevented the agency from assuming a leadership role on cultural, historical, and environmental education. While loyalty to the Service's mission remained strong, morale in some areas of the Service deteriorated. In fact, some have referred to the Service as a "dysfunctional family."

In the last two years, administration and Congressional leadership have reversed some of these debilitating policies, but their legacy continues to be an albatross around the neck of one of the most dedicated federal agencies. To reverse this trend, concrete actions must be taken in several broad areas.

Managers within the National Park Service cannot perceive their responsibilities in isolation from their local community, their state, and their region. While units may have been selected because of their national

significance, entry into the national park system does not imply removal from the regional context in which these units exist. Park managers must develop and implement a proactive partnership with neighboring communities and tribes.

There must be strengthening of the characteristics of the Service that have given it credibility worldwide. The underpinning of this credibility must be a perception that NPS policies are based on principles of wise resource management. The Service should emphasize these principles. An expanded and much stronger research component is a prerequisite to achieving this end.

Reestablishing the respect and credibility of the Service with the public and the professional community of natural resource, cultural, and historical experts will provide the Service with a unique opportunity to assume a leadership role in conveying to each generation the American story. Each park unit represents a small part of the heritage and character of this nation, and the Service, through an expanded program of interpretation and education, has a unique opportunity to reach millions of people each year.

Leadership is an ethic which must be espoused and encouraged at all levels of the Service. Leadership refers to the culture of an organization: managers should be creative and embrace responsibility, not avoid accountability and play it safe. Rewards, incentives, and promotions are the means by which an agency can establish such an ethic. The National Park Service must discard negative self-images and encourage its managers to be leaders in upholding the Service's historic missions.

Communication is critical to leadership. Establishing processes through which effective communication can take place is essential. These processes must ensure that there is close and ongoing communication between Congress and the Service, between the secretary of the interior and land management agencies within his jurisdiction, between the NPS director and his top managers, and between these managers and the park superintendents. Communication with the public through the press is equally important and is an essential step in breaking away from the "island" mentality which too often characterized the Service in the past.

Effective leadership requires an understanding of the changing political environment in which an agency operates. Policies and goals must fit into this dynamic context. In a democracy, an agency that ignores its political environment does so at its own peril.

The Environmental Leadership Working Group has crafted recommendations to meet these needs. The Group divided its deliberations into six areas: (1) establishing a program to promote ecologically and culturally sound management practices; (2) leadership in environmental and cultural education; (3) establishing a leadership ethic at all levels of the Service; (4) professionalism within the Service; (5) cooperative strategies to protect the U.S. natural and cultural heritage, and; (6) funding which cuts across all these areas.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1

Ecologically and culturally sound management.

Background and Findings

The central task of the National Park Service is to maintain, within a world that is mostly governed by human activity, a substantial sample of functioning natural systems that are not characterized by human domination and to protect major examples of past human activity so that present and future generations can learn what the past has to offer them. As the world changes, the specifics of the task change. Where once custodial management and the promotion of tourism were sufficient, now scientific expertise and first class research capability have become crucial; where once parks were isolated from most human activity, they are now inundated by external threats and need to be managed in partnership with those who share park resources and boundaries.

For parks which have significant natural resources, ecologically sound management is essential. Such management requires the maintenance or restoration of native ecosystems and resistance to the establishment of alien organisms. Where possible, ecosystem management should attempt to preserve natural processes, operating at a scale consistent with the evolution of the ecosystem being managed. Preserving the evolutionary matrix of environment and organisms is the overarching task of managing ecosystem processes, and in those instances where the ecological balance is under threat or is uniquely fragile, this task may require that access be limited.

To establish such a strong ecosystem management culture will require that the Service upgrade its research capability so that it can speak with a voice of authority in areas ranging from natural resource sciences to culture and history. Despite repeated calls for a strong research component over the last three decades, the Service's response has been sporadic and inconsistent, characterized by alternating cycles of commitment and decline. In a world where ecological management has become a primary concern, this is a serious deficiency. If it cannot keep pace, the National Park Service risks losing not only its prestige and distinction as a leader in natural, historical, and cultural management, but its relevance to a world where research-based scientific excellence is indispensable.

Strengthening the National Park Service's research program will require the agency to address how its research activities should be organized and administered. Inherently, there is a trade-off between a centralized effort under the aegis of an assistant director for research, and a decentralized program located at the regional or park unit level. The former will bias research towards the broad, overarching issues confronting the national park system, while the latter will push the research focus towards applied problems confronting individual parks. There is no single correct choice. Either option, or even a combination of the two, can be justified.

An important part of the Service's upgraded research program should be the establishment of cooperative relationships with other federal, state, and tribal land agencies, universities, and private nonprofit institutions. These relationships could involve joint-research, peer review of reports, and funding of both basic and applied research projects.

Ecologically sound management requires active management and a vision which looks beyond artificial boundaries at environmental concerns, whether they originate locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally. The Service must have the capacity to respond to threats, whether they come from a dam at the park boundary, air pollution from a facility 100 miles away, or climate change caused by increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Further, the National Park Service should establish strong public/private partnerships with states, tribes, local governments, neighborhood associations, and nonprofit organizations to ensure that external threats are minimized and the interests of both the Service and its neighbors are equitably met.

On the cultural side, the Service's needs for expanded research capacity and public/private partnerships are no less critical. For example,

there is no existing database of archeological, ethnographic, and historical sites. Most known cultural sites have not even been evaluated to determine their significance. Next to the Smithsonian, the Service holds the largest collection of artifacts, many of which have long gone unnoticed.

In addition to research needs, contemporary commitments to pluralism offer the Service new opportunities to work together with distinct communities and Native peoples to aid them in expressing their own heritage. The Service should establish partnerships that will facilitate the joint management of historical, cultural, and natural resources, as well as cooperative research programs with tribes, universities, and local organizations.

Recommendations

The National Park Service must substantially upgrade its research capability in the areas of ecology and natural resources management. Its credibility in managing its resources, providing interpretive programs, and promoting its policies will be dependent on the strength of the information on which its actions and programs are based. A strong and respected research program is a prerequisite for developing a first-rate information base.

The National Park Service should promote sound ecological management of its natural resources and develop visitor use policies consistent with such management. In some situations, this may include limiting visitor use.

Simultaneously, the National Park Service should enhance the management of its cultural and heritage programs to emphasize the American experience in all its diversity. An expanded research program, which includes a strong peer review component, must be part of such an effort.

The National Park Service cannot manage its resources in isolation from environmental concerns which may originate locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally.

The National Park Service should form strong public/private partnerships with states, tribes, local governments, and nonprofit organizations. Such partnerships could facilitate joint management of historical, cultural, and

natural resources, joint research programs, and ongoing exchanges of ideas and expertise.

Where practical, the National Park Service should pursue cooperative research efforts with other federal, state, and tribal land agencies, universities, and private, nonprofit institutions.

Issue 2

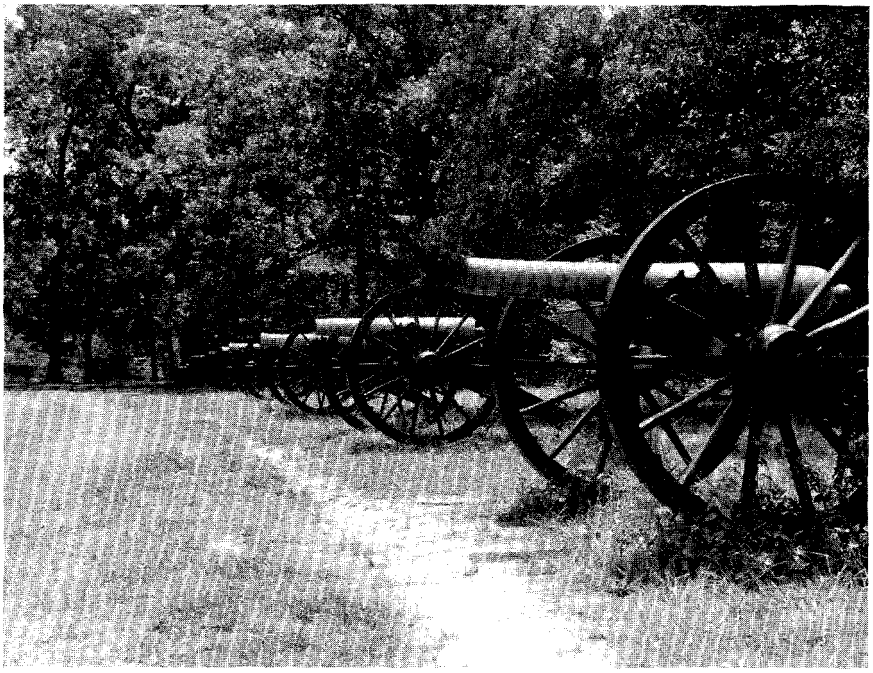
Education.

Background and Findings

From Everglades National Park in Florida to Gates of the Arctic National Park in Alaska, the Service has a unique set of resources from which to provide educational information about ecological systems. Similarly, from Minute Man National Historical Park in Concord, Massachusetts to San Antonio Missions National Historical Park in Texas, the Service possesses the cultural vehicles through which the wide scope and diverse nature of American history can be told. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine that the Congress did not intend for the Service to play a prominent role in educating Americans about our nation's heritage when it chose to preserve these sites in the national park system.

Nonetheless, NPS interpretive programs have regularly been sacrificed in the face of competing demands. The resulting message to NPS employees has been that interpretive programs are not a top priority and that strong efforts and innovation in interpretive programs will not be rewarded. While there have been successes, most notably at Everglades, Yellowstone, Lowell, and Indiana Dunes, systemwide there is something missing. Visitors to the parks are not fully engaged by what the parks have to offer. As a result, too many of the 260 million park visitors each year return home with less than they came for and less than they deserve. A park visitor should be challenged by the intricate dynamics of a natural ecosystem or drawn speechless by the words of an American who came before him or her. A park visit should broaden Americans' understanding and their horizons.

Interpretation is too often isolated from research and resource man-



Shiloh National Military Park

agement. Interpreters are not always current in terms of knowledge about their fields or even informed about park management policies. One reason for this is that parks rely heavily on seasonal employees and volunteers for their interpretive programs and strong internal lines of communication do not get developed. This overreliance also causes the quality of interpretative programs to vary widely.

By and large, park interpreters are engaging, thoughtful, and committed. Nevertheless, they are hampered in an agency which does not regard interpretation as a professional job category. Further, interpreters are often in over their heads academically because the Service is generally unable to recruit or retain interpreters with educational backgrounds directly related to the jobs they are asked to perform and does not provide incentives or opportunities for employees to upgrade their academic qualifications. Although many do an admirable job, it is unfair to expect interpreters without college backgrounds to provide sophisticated information about where their park fits contextually in the broad scope of natural science or American history.

Budgetary restraints have also played a role in limiting NPS interpretative programs. Throughout most of the past decade, NPS budgets caused managers to cutback on seasonal positions, many of which were in interpretation. Additionally, lack of funds has resulted in a backlog of out-of-date materials, exhibits, and other interpretive tools, which undermine the public's perception of interpretation.

Fortunately, there are many opportunities for the Service to recapture its vital interpretive mission. Foremost, the Service must provide professional opportunities for its interpreters and integrate interpretation into park management as a full partner. A visit to a park visitor center should be more than passive learning: the visitor should be engaged by interesting and informative NPS interpreters and interpretive programs.

The Service must market what it offers. In an era when the public faces many competing opportunities, NPS officials need to emphasize the services they provide. More attention should be paid to video programs and hands-on tours. Finally, the Service should promote the use of parks as classrooms for nearby schools in support of the secretary of education's "America 2000" program.

Environmental and cultural education programs at national parks provide important opportunities to excite students about our country's heritage. If visitors fail to appreciate the resources preserved in national parks or the threats that they face, then the National Park Service has served neither itself nor our nation.

Recommendations

The national parks should serve as an outdoor classroom in which millions of Americans can learn about the American experience and, more specifically, the ecological, historical, and cultural values which are part of that experience.

The National Park Service should create a professional career path for interpretive personnel and reward creativity and innovation in this area.

To enhance the public's understanding of major environmental issues, the National Park Service, in its role as an educational institution, should support the inclusion of these issues in their interpretive programs. To ensure the credibility of the information provided, discussion of these issues

should be tied to park resources and linked to ongoing research efforts both within the National Park Service and other federal environmental and natural resource agencies.

The National Park Service should rely to a greater degree on multimedia programs to interpret park resources in order to reach audiences beyond park boundaries.

Issue 3

A leadership ethic in the National Park Service.

Background and Findings

Seventy-five years ago it was much easier to be a leader within the National Park Service. The agency's responsibilities focused on caring for the large, isolated parks such as Yellowstone and Yosemite. The world was relatively simple. NPS employees were widely acclaimed as the world's best resource managers. In the ensuing years, however, the Service's responsibilities have broadened dramatically, its resource management tasks have become much more complex, and its environmental awareness has fallen behind others. The Service is no longer perceived as a leader on environmental and natural resource issues.

Foremost among the Service's challenges in the coming years is to regain the agency's former stature. NPS employees can do this by "leading by example"—minimizing the adverse impacts they may have on the environment in the course of carrying out their responsibilities. The opportunities to assert leadership are many in areas which range from energy use to hazardous waste disposal to recycling of solid waste to improving sewer and septic systems. They will not be the same in every park. Therefore, rigid guidelines may be counterproductive.

Today, the National Park Service is responsible for: (1) protecting significant cultural, historical, and recreational resources; (2) serving as a host for approximately 260 million visitors each year; (3) enforcing safety and other laws to protect those visitors while simultaneously protecting the resources within their park units; (4) being world-class educators that actively inform visitors through interpretive programs; (5) providing in-

ternational leadership and expertise in park management; and (6) working constructively with state, local, and private organizations to advance conservation understanding and action.

Such a mission requires a uniquely diverse and interdisciplinary work force and requires a decentralized organizational structure. But many in the Service do not appreciate the breadth of the agency's mission nor the reasons for its decentralization. Part of the problem is that training for NPS employees does not touch on the broad range of responsibilities faced by the agency employees. In comparison to other federal agencies, NPS training programs are remarkably deficient in giving employees a clear sense of the agency's mission.

Another consequence of the Service's diversity and decentralization is its proneness to communication failures. In an organization like the Service, clear lines of communication and formal procedures need to be established. Otherwise, constructive interaction between employees at different levels or offices within the agency will come to a standstill. At different times over the past ten years, the Service has suffered because managers at various levels believed that they were not being consulted by their immediate supervisors.

Finally, it is important that there be strong direction from NPS leadership as to the agency's immediate and future priorities. A strong leadership ethic requires that performances which enable the agency to better carry out its priorities be encouraged and rewarded. A clear declaration of NPS goals, linked with personnel policies which reward the achievement of these goals, will send a message that it is as important for all NPS managers, from the superintendent at the Effigy Mounds National Monument, to the director of the National Park Service, to be a leader.

Agencies with an effective leadership ethic are characterized by: (1) an understanding by all employees of the basic mission of the agency; (2) a clear organizational strategy understood by all top managers; (3) a strong process for communications and interactions at all levels of the agency; (4) a system of rewards and incentives for top managers and employees who demonstrate leadership; (5) a culture which promotes interaction and partnership with external constituents. The Service can clearly improve its performance in each of these areas.

The 75th Anniversary Symposium at Vail represented a laudatory effort to encourage a broad spectrum of NPS employees to identify problems and develop solutions. It should, however, be a beginning of a more

open and interactive process within which NPS employees at all levels will be encouraged to contribute their ideas and opinions about improving the management of the national park system.

Recommendations

The National Park Service should demonstrate environmental leadership by "leading by example" at all levels of the Service. It should strive to become the most environmentally aware agency in the U.S. government.

The National Park Service should refocus its training programs to ensure that employees are knowledgeable of the NPS mission, and management personnel are skilled in all aspects of management, including building partnerships with external constituencies.

The National Park Service should take steps to improve communications between the director and the regional directors, between the regional directors and superintendents, and between the managers in the Washington headquarters and those outside.

The National Park Service should structure rewards and incentives so that efforts to carry out the agency's mission are recognized. Managers demonstrating innovation and creativity in ways that fulfill the shared vision of the Service should be recognized as leaders within the agency.

Issue 4

Developing professionalism within a political environment.

Background and Findings

Over the past seventy-five years, the Service has grown dramatically in size and complexity, reflecting both the addition of diverse types of units to the system and increasing visitation. Moreover, there is a growing number of people and activities of all kinds in lands adjacent to parks, particularly in areas where private lands subject to development surround the park unit. The Service has found itself frequently pushed into the po-

litical arena in which the interface between career professionals and elected and appointed officials becomes of critical importance.

The Service has often chafed under the constraints placed on it by higher levels within the administration or by Congress. On the other hand, encouraged by outside groups, the Service frequently has been seen as acting independent of direction coming from above. In those instances in which policy decisions and direction from the administration have been opposed by NPS personnel, these individuals have sometimes gone directly or indirectly to the Congress or interest groups to rectify the situation. This has strained relationships and has resulted in increasing attempts by political leaders to exert additional control over the Service through a variety of means, including placing political appointees in positions formerly occupied by career NPS personnel.

It is unrealistic to expect that the National Park Service will reclaim the "good old days" when it could operate as a cohesive, largely independent professional agency. On the other hand, it is important to the future of the lands and resources that the Service manages, as well as the American public it serves, that the Service operate constructively within the executive branch of government and effectively interact with elected representatives at all levels.

The creation of a strategic planning and policy office in the Service can substantially minimize a number of the above problems. First of all, it could provide the Service with a unified message when it deals with Congress and the administration. The Service's relationship with key congressional committees has deteriorated, primarily because the National Park Service has not produced a coherent legislative program. Secondly, it would allow the agency to become more proactive within the executive branch. A strategic planning office would unify the Service's political contacts. It would be the division charged with maintaining constant contact with important players in the Office of Management and Budget, the Domestic Policy Council, other federal agencies, and Congress. Finally, a policy office would provide the Service with an improved capability to develop a coordinated set of long-term policy goals.

Another step in ensuring that the Service meets this mandate would be an effort to foster improved understanding and appreciation of the political/career interface between NPS people and elected representatives. The increasing layers of political appointees between the director of the

Service and the secretary of the interior, as well as the relative lack of familiarity of recent NPS directors with people and problems in the field, have caused confusion, uncertainty, and sometimes open hostility. While in some instances it would appear that the direction from above was clear, it simply was deemed inconsistent with the NPS view of what should be done.

This situation is not unique. The Volker Commission report concluded that an excessive number of relatively inexperienced political appointees between the secretary and the career work force of many agencies has reduced the quality and effectiveness of public service. It discourages talented men and women from remaining in the career service or entering in the first place. Ironically, at a time when the private sector is substantially trimming the layers between the top level of an organization and its operating forces, the government is doing the reverse.

Recommendations

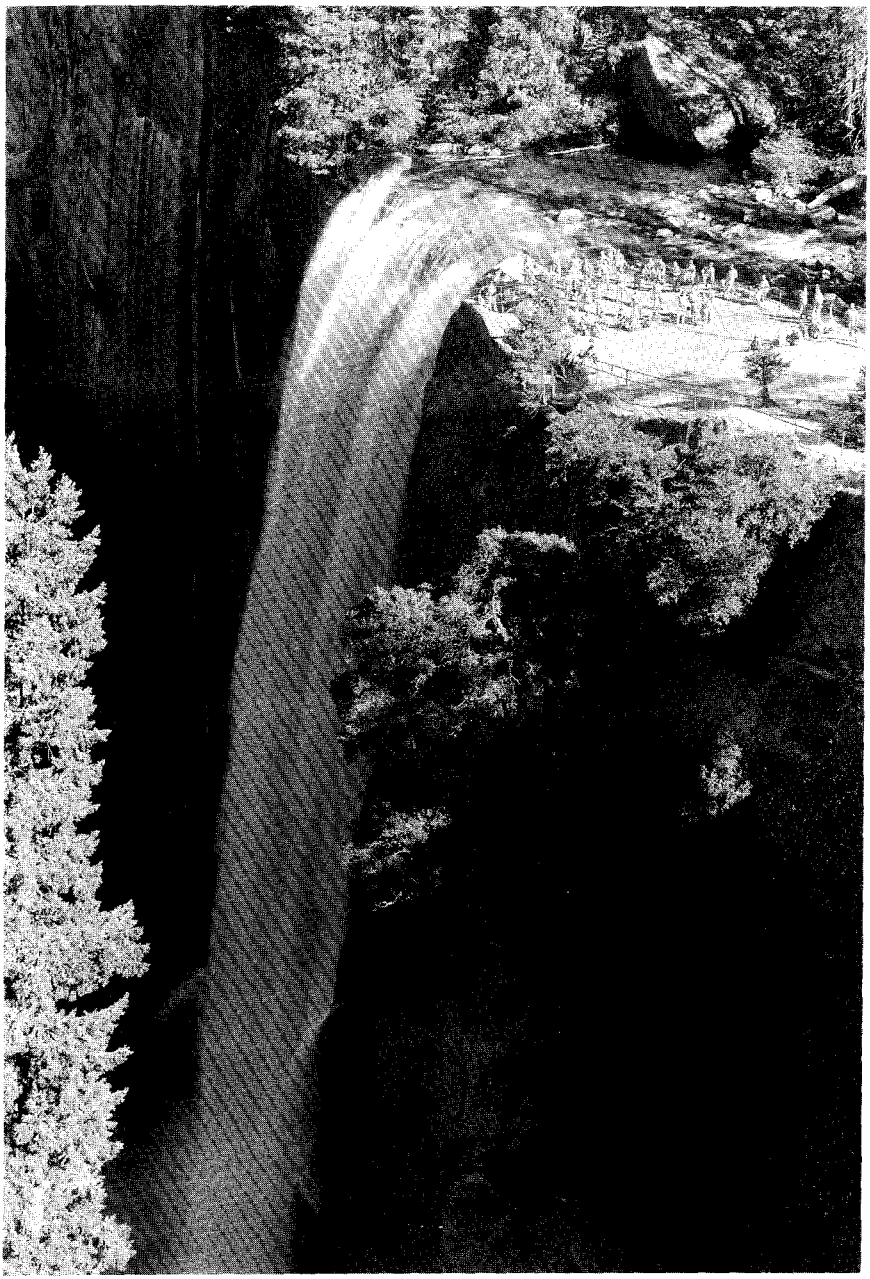
The National Park Service should develop an annual legislative program which should evolve from field recommendations coordinated through the Service's regional offices. The program should be proactive and should involve legislators from both sides of the aisle.

The National Park Service should enhance its institutional capability to develop and implement policy analysis and strategic planning.

The secretary of the interior should review the organization levels between the secretary and the director of the National Park Service with an eye to shortening them as much as possible, and to ensure that there is a mutual understanding of programs and policies. The director of the National Park Service should have direct and frequent access to the secretary.

The director of the National Park Service should establish a planned rotation system between the field and key assignments in Washington to ensure that there is a continual interchange of ideas, as well as an understanding of current NPS programs and challenges.

The regional offices of the National Park Services should be given clearer



Yosemite National Park

authority and responsibility for the coordination and direction of NPS activities within the region, including ensuring that NPS programs and policies are effectively developed and executed.

The director of the National Park Service should establish an interchange program with other federal and state cultural, historical, and natural resource organizations.

The National Park Service should continue to provide leadership locally, regionally, and internationally in managing natural, cultural, and historical areas and designing and delivering educational programs that enhance people's understanding of their natural, historical, and cultural heritage.

Issue 5

Partnerships to preserve the nation's natural and cultural heritage.

Background and Findings

Much of the first century of protection of this country's unique cultural and historic heritage involved federal government ownership. It was not until the mid-1930s that Congress first considered providing the Service with authority to enter into cooperative agreements to preserve historic sites and assist in the planning of parks, parkways, and recreational needs. Since that time, Congress has continued to develop legislative formulae that separate protection and ownership and involve comprehensive planning. In the 1960s and 1970s, the establishment of the Cape Cod National Seashore, the Lowell Heritage Park, the San Antonio Missions Historical Park, and the Martin Luther King Historical Monument extended the portfolio of instruments developed to protect important values without complete federal ownership. Since the 1960s, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has provided financial assistance to states and local governments for the purpose of fostering partnerships to create new parks and restore old ones, and to encourage statewide planning processes.

In the 1980s, a significant percentage of the newer NPS units incor-

porated cooperative approaches to preservation. Further, laws were passed for areas not considered units of the national park system that relied heavily on concerted and coordinated state, local, and federal partnerships. These included the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, the Blackstone River Valley, the Delaware and Lehigh Canal, and the Illinois and Michigan Canal. During the same period, technical assistance programs were expanded as a result of Congressional action. These activities, primarily located in the regional offices, aided state and local governments.

Many of these efforts and programs have been limited by cutbacks in funding at both the federal and state level. The effectiveness of the LWCF, for example, has diminished over the last decade as the result of budget cuts. Although the Congress has authorized LWCF expenditures to total $900 million per year, they have appropriated, on average, only about $200 million annually during the 1980s. Stateside grants from the LWCF averaged less than $40 million during this time period. As the demand for support increased, funding levels dropped. Because the rewards of participating were so low, some states have threatened to withdraw from the LWCF funded program. These cuts have threatened to destroy the twenty-five-year-old legacy of partnerships with state and local governments.

Nevertheless, the deep commitment among Americans to save places of natural and cultural importance to their way of life has not diminished. The Congress, sensing this concern, has been willing to support actions to incorporate many of these places into the national park system. The practice of creating park units for particular constituencies has raised concerns that the criterion of national significance was being discarded and the Service's resources spread too thin. However, it is unlikely that Congress will turn its back on growing public pressures to preserve and protect places of natural, historical, or cultural significance—even if their significance is more regional than national. Unless new programs are developed, the leadership of the Service, as well as those responsible for developing the U.S. budget, will feel increasingly uncomfortable with this tension.

The Environmental Leadership Working Group proposes a three-part program as a means to resolve its current parks-development dilemma: (1) amending the LWCF program to establish a grassroots process to identify areas of unique value; (2) creating a new program to preserve heritage areas; and (3) developing a funding program to support

heritage and natural resource preservation. These recommendations build on the experience of the 1980s, which indicates that there is widespread public acceptance of new approaches to conservation emphasizing multi-level participation of public and private organizations. In many of these approaches the federal government is a cooperator, but not necessarily the landowner.

Recommendations

The National Park Service should foster a new grassroots planning process to save the diversity of America's natural and cultural heritage and to provide increased recreational opportunities for all Americans. In doing this, the National Park Service should work in partnership with other federal agencies, with state, local, and tribal governments, and with nonprofit organizations, both in identifying resources and in creating strategies to protect, manage, and interpret those resources. Those elements identified through the planning process would fall into different categories. Those of national significance might become part of the national park system, while those of regional or local significance should be preserved through a range of options, including federal and state/tribal partnerships. This process should be supported by renewed financial and technical assistance to the states.

An American Heritage Area (AHA) should be established to protect and conserve areas that are of significant regional value and are worthy of national recognition, but which do not meet the requirements necessary for inclusion in the national park system. Under this proposed system, the National Park Service would enter into partnerships with state and local governments to conserve specific areas without long-term federal involvement.

Existing National Park Service programs, including the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance programs, the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery program, the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan program, and state grants for the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and Historic Preservation Fund would be maintained, or in certain instances, reconfigured, to complement the proposed grassroots planning process and AHA program.

The National Park Service should work with all federal landholding agencies to ensure their participation and cooperation with these proposed programs.

Issue 6

National Park Service funding.

Background and Findings

Over the past two decades, the Service has taken on numerous additional missions. Some of these have been in the form of new programs or new parks mandated by Congress, while others relate to meeting federal environmental regulations and laws. Despite the ongoing increases in overall responsibility, the Service has not benefited from substantial expansions in budgetary appropriations. During the 1980s, no real growth occurred in the NPS budget. One part of the NPS budget, appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for land acquisition by the Service and the state grant program, has been funded at substantially lower levels than in the last decades. To compound matters, line item requests from Congress have functionally reduced the critical operations budget of the Service.

The Environmental Leadership Working Group recognizes the difficulties imposed on the budget process by recent budgetary agreements and realizes that there is no single, perfect funding alternative. All proposals to increase funding have political liabilities. We fully recognize their adoption will be difficult, but we acknowledge that without incremental increases in revenues, the goals we have outlined cannot be achieved.

We suggest that the National Park Service pursue several options. First, it should redouble its efforts to obtain significant appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. As a parallel effort, we recommend that the National Park Service strongly advocate a one-cent-per-gallon surcharge on gasoline as a means to support federal parks and recreation programs. The tax should be part of a larger gasoline tax package to raise additional revenues to improve the country's transportation infrastructure and to protect the environment. We also believe that the Service and the Office of Management and Budget should look carefully

at the broad array of user fees available to the Service. User fees currently pay for about 5 percent of the costs of the national park system. This amount should be increased. Visitors who derive benefits from the system should pay a portion of the costs they place on that system.

Recommendations

The issue of funding underlies all aspects of the symposium working group recommendations. To implement the programs outlined in this report, including the American Heritage Area program, additional monies will be needed.

The National Park Service should increase its efforts to obtain a meaningful appropriation level from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. As a parallel effort, it should also strongly advocate a one-cent-per-gallon fuel tax to support federal parks and recreation programs. The one cent should be part of a larger gasoline tax package to raise additional revenues to improve the country's transportation infrastructure and protect the environment.

The National Park Service and the Office of Management and Budget should study the broad array of user fee options, which are effective and important vehicles for revenue enhancement in order to assess the relative costs and benefits of individual proposals. Those which are determined to be both equitable and cost-effective should be pursued.

Working Group on Environmental Leadership

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6

Resource Stewardship

Introduction

The efforts of the Resource Stewardship Working Group (including the participants at the Vail Symposium and those who contributed throughout the process) are only the most recent aspect of a long historical tradition of critiquing the way the National Park System resources are managed. Previous efforts have included the prescient "Fauna of the National Parks" studies in the early 1930s which first identified park resource problems, the National Academy of Science's analysis of science and research in 1963, the widely acclaimed Leopold Report's review of natural resource management policies of the same year, the National Parks Conservation Association's thorough analysis of all aspects of the National Park Service published as *Investing in Park Futures: A Blueprint for Tomorrow*; the National Park Service's own *21st Century Task Force Report*; the Conservation Foundation's report *National Parks for a New Generation*; and the current National Academy of Science's study of science and research which is in progress. Reading these reports impresses one with the insight of past study groups and it brings an awareness that many of the challenges facing the National Park Service are long-standing.

This chapter presents six basic issues considered to be critical to protecting resources in the National Park System: (1) the Service's ability to protect park resources from external threats and to positively influence compatible land uses and resource management within regional ecosystems and historical context of parks; (2) the protection restoration and maintenance of park resources; (3) strengthening the parks' abilities to identify and evaluate their resources; (4) the stature and professionalism of

research and resource management and their integration into park management; (5) public support for resource stewardship programs; and (6) the processes governing the addition of new areas and the expansion of additional areas to the national park system.

Preceding each issue is a brief background discussion highlighting the historical evolution of the concern and describing previous actions that have been undertaken to deal with the issue. Following each issue, several recommendations are presented. For each recommendation, specific steps for implementation either by the National Park Service or individual parks are listed. The issues and recommendations have evolved through meetings of the Resource Stewardship Working Group during the summer of 1991, and were thoroughly discussed and modified by participants at the Vail Symposium. Final changes were made after the symposium based on input received during the public comment period. This chapter, therefore, represents a broad consensus of actions and direction that is necessary to guide the National Park Service into the twenty-first century and to reaffirm its role as a leader in cultural and natural resource stewardship.

Issues and Recommendations

Issue 1

What steps can be taken to more effectively protect park resources from external threats and to positively influence compatible land uses and resource management within the regional ecosystems and historical context of parks?

Background and Findings

For many years boundary lines essentially defined the way public lands were managed. National park managers pursued their mission solely within the borders of their units and paid little attention to what happened outside their boundaries—the borders of which commonly cut across watershed, animal migration, other ecologically based lines, and historical contexts. This arrangement was adequate in a time when most parks were surrounded by undeveloped lands. At that time the pressures of development did not result in the wholesale loss of the resources that

provided thematic context or an integral setting for natural and cultural sites within the system. Today, however, increased population and expanded resource and energy demands are impacting park resources such as air and water quality, wildlife, and scenic vistas. Shared ecosystems as well as cultural landscapes are being adversely impacted. For the Service, the problem is now recognized as one with systemwide dimensions, and it has focused concern on how parks can most effectively deal with park neighbors and their activities.

In responding to this problem, parks can first look to their individual legislative mandates. A few mandates—by recognizing that parks exist in and are influenced by their regional environment—provide much clearer direction than others which are silent on the subject. A number of laws have also been enacted over the last twenty years which provide some authority for the National Park Service to involve itself in issues that transcend park boundaries. These include the National Environmental Policy Act which provides for federal interagency consultation; the Historic Sites Act of 1935 which established a national policy to preserve the nation's historical heritage; the National Historic Preservation Act which established a requirement for federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties; and the National Forest Management Act and Federal Land Policy and Management Act which require the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to coordinate their resource management plans with other agencies.

When used effectively and consistently, these laws can provide a level of protection for parks and serve as mechanisms for managers to function in a regional context. However, these acts do not fully protect park resources from external impacts, nor do they provide clear authority for park managers to become involved in certain activities external to the parks.

The first congressional attempt to define the Service's responsibility for external land use and resource management decisions occurred in 1978 when Congress passed the Redwood Amendments in response to the upstream logging impacts then threatening Redwood National Park. Section 1a-1 of those amendments provides for the "protection, management, and administration" of the national park system to ensure its integrity. Although this provision appears to authorize the Service to take reasonable measures to protect park resources from degradation, the Ser-

vice has been reluctant to use this authority, and the courts have not vigorously enforced this provision. A recent congressional attempt to define a specific park's responsibility for external land uses was the Gettysburg Boundary Legislation, which, among other things, provides incentives for cooperation among governmental entities and the private sector to protect the battlefield setting.

Further complicating this issue is the fact that most park managers receive little or no training on the laws, strategies, or policies that might be used to address resource issues that transcend park boundaries. As a result, some park managers are reluctant to involve themselves in external affairs, expressing concern or confusion about their authority to do so. Others may feel that they lack the requisite skills to work with external groups and the media, particularly in confrontational situations. These concerns can also hamper a park's ability to cultivate public understanding and support for its own resource preservation and management programs.

Recommendations

There should be more effective and positive use of all existing authorities to deal with concerns and activities that transcend park boundaries. To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should:

1. Initiate an intensive training course and develop appropriate training aids for managers that explain existing federal, state, and local authorities, mechanisms, and strategies for addressing transboundary issues, and to help managers view park management in an ecosystem and historical context. The course should be a requirement for new superintendents and be a mandatory part of any managerial development program. It should also be a component of the resource management specialist training program.
2. Develop local, regional, and national constituencies which are sensitive to the importance of park resources and which will help defend parks against the impacts of adverse external activities.

There should be better documentation of transboundary problems and more effective use of scientific data in mitigating them. To implement this recommendation individual parks should:

1. Identify and prioritize external problems facing each park and develop plans to address them.

2. Coordinate their resource management goals with park neighbors and actively participate in local and regional land-use planning efforts to prevent or mitigate the impact of potential adverse threats.
3. Make effective use of existing scientific data from all sources and conduct additional research if necessary in order to better document, respond to, and mitigate the potential impacts of adverse external threats.
4. The staff of individual parks should become more familiar with state and local laws and regulations that deal with land use, conservation, and preservation.

The secretary of the interior should clarify existing authorities, ensure their appropriate and consistent use, and seek additional legislation necessary to protect park resources against external threats. The secretary should encourage Department of the Interior solicitors and the Department of Justice attorneys to be more aggressive and supportive in the use of existing authorities. To do this, the National Park Service should undertake the following in concert with the secretary:

1. Encourage Department of the Interior solicitors to clearly define the legal responsibility and authority of park managers to involve themselves in external matters impacting park resources.
2. Develop a program to evaluate and identify those parks where additional land acquisitions may be the only way to deal with external threats.
3. Seek legislation selectively to address pressing external problems confronting individual parks, and regularly review whether more general statutory authority is necessary to enable the National Park Service to address external problems effectively.
4. Issue a triennial "State of the Parks" report indicating the current health and integrity of each unit and the Service as a whole.
5. Evaluate the need to staff each region with an environmental lawyer and/or develop a cooperative relationship with a local law school.
6. Enter into partnerships with state and local officials to broaden protection for National Register properties, National Historic Landmarks, and National Natural Landmarks.

7. Encourage the secretary to meet periodically with the chiefs of all bureaus under the secretary's jurisdiction.

Issue 2

How can protection, restoration, and maintenance of resources be strengthened in NPS units?

Background and Findings

The ultimate goal of resource stewardship is the protection and maintenance of park resources. To preserve and protect park resources has from the beginning been the primary goal of the National Park Service. However, the pressures on parks from visitors and changing land uses around parks combined with a growing diversity of regional and even global threats makes this task ever more difficult.

Resource stewardship is also complicated by the fact that although the national park system continues to increase in size and complexity, this change has not been accompanied by an equivalent increase in the number of resource management professionals. It is also apparent that the resource issues facing parks are too complex to be handled by resource management generalists forced to deal with a multitude of issues and problems. As a result of this problem, parks have a limited ability to interpret existing information, detect changes resulting from external and internal threats, implement resource management plans, monitor trends in resources, recover from environmental catastrophes, and place resources in their proper ecological, historical, or archaeological context.

Recommendations

The Service should substantially increase the number of resource professionals, emphasizing subject matter specialists currently lacking in the agency and the placement of individuals in parks which lack sufficient resource management expertise.

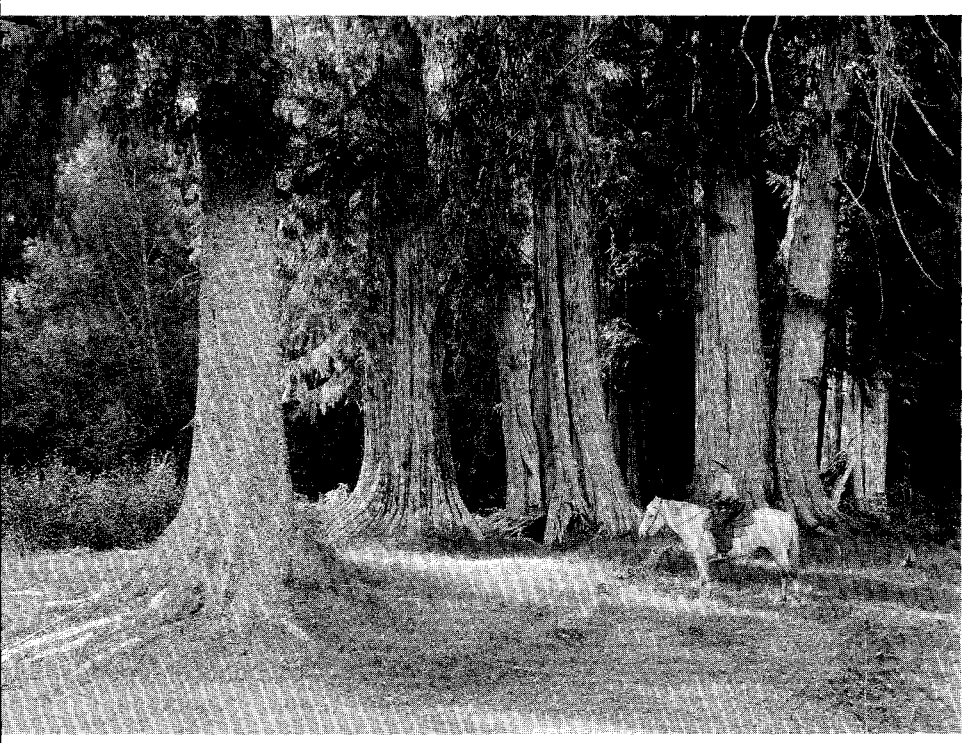
The Service should enhance the ability of parks to utilize the expertise of resource professionals who work outside the agency.

To implement both recommendations individual parks should:

1. Develop the infrastructure necessary to enhance these activities such as adequate research and laboratory facilities.
2. Establish closer ties and better lines of communication between resource professionals and those responsible for implementing recommendations such as resource managers and maintenance crews.
3. Initiate and implement programs to identify and prioritize internal and external threats to park resources.
4. Effectively monitor resource trends and conditions. Procedure: Use measurable parameters or indicators sensitive enough to provide an early warning of change. Work with other agencies involved in developing monitoring protocols. Give monitoring priority to resources that are at risk.
5. Identify measurable objectives for desired resource conditions. The identification of baseline conditions should be linked in part to global change studies.
6. Establish and implement human carrying capacities for each unit.

To implement both recommendations the National Park Service should:

1. Develop new research programs and enhance existing programs dealing with methods of preservation technology for the treatment of cultural resources, particularly for those materials where standards are not available.
2. Expand and improve treatment programs for cultural resources where adequate information does exist.
3. Continue the current series of the eighteen-month resource managers training course and evaluate its effectiveness.
4. Make implementation of identified resource management programs an important performance evaluation criterion for managers.



Olympic National Park

Issue 3

How can the ability to identify and evaluate resources be strengthened?

Background and Findings

Resource stewardship of the parks must be grounded in sound knowledge of their natural and cultural assets. Some parks have an extensive history of scientific studies and resource evaluations. For example, over 3000 separate resource studies have been conducted in and around Olympic National Park. This type of documentation is, however, an exception. More often little is known about the actual resources parks contain, their significance, degree of risk, and their response to change. The principal reason for this is that most parks lack sufficient staff and/or proper expertise to understand, interpret, and use the information they already have. Based on previous studies, this deficiency may be true for about 70 percent of the NPS units.

Resolving this issue will require a logical procedure for organizing existing data, identifying necessary additional information and research needs, and monitoring those resources that best reflect environmental changes. It complements Issue 2 in recognizing that implementation of this procedure is not always possible with current staffing levels.

Once sufficient staffing is in place, a park's ability to use existing and future information is, in large measure, related to its methods of managing those data. Data management embodies the systematic organization and cataloging of information in a form that makes it readily accessible to users. When good data management protocols are lacking, those individuals responsible for interpreting resource information are often unaware of who is conducting or has conducted research, what resources have been studied, and where to find the information.

There are several examples of good data management protocols. The Pacific Northwest Region is completing a program to catalog all existing resource studies from all of its parks in standardized databases which interface with national library databases and is developing similarly structured park-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the three south Florida national parks have established conservation data centers for managing biological information. These centers are a part of the Fifty State Natural Heritage Program network developed by The Nature Conservancy.

Recommendations

The Service should standardize and base fund programs that identify and evaluate the significance of park resources.

The Service should revise the management planning process to emphasize resource protection. To implement these recommendations individual parks should:

1. Gather and organize existing information recognizing that all parks contain natural and cultural resources that need to be identified, evaluated, protected, and managed. Catalog all resource information available on a given park and surrounding region in a database that identifies the investigators, describes the nature of the study, and indicates where it took place and where the original documents are located. This program could be patterned after

the resource database program in the Pacific Northwest Region and will require adequate provisions for upkeep and maintenance. As resource information is identified, appropriate data are stored in centralized regional data centers which would be compatible with, built upon, and be linked to existing resource databases like the List of Classified Structures and Cultural Sites Inventory, and those available from state historic preservation officers and from state liaison officers.

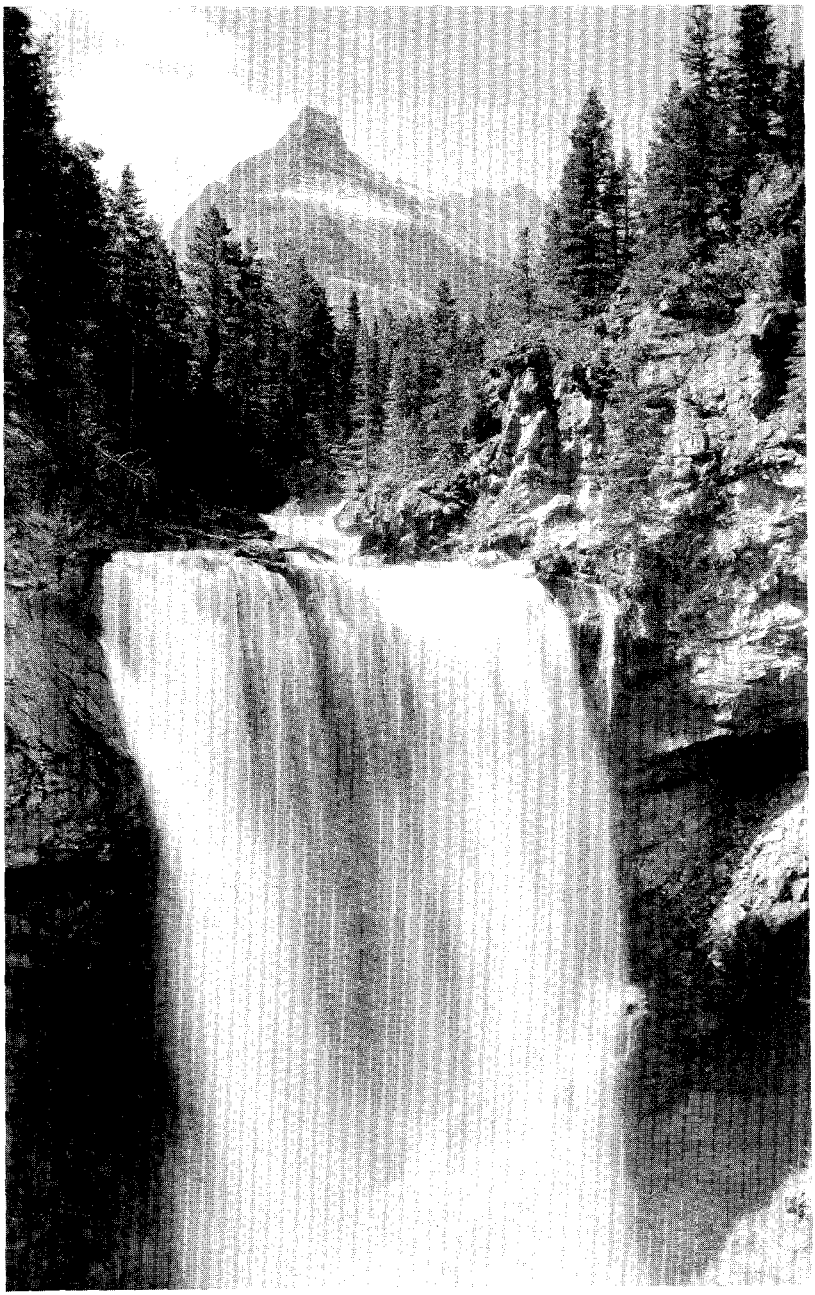
2. Synthesize and interpret the available data thereby providing a history of scientific and cultural research for a given unit.
3. Develop a functional Geographic Information System synthesizing all relevant spatial data.
4. Develop conceptual ecosystem models and comprehensive contextual studies for historic and cultural resources to help identify and prioritize gaps in resource knowledge. Procedure: Identify natural resource data needs in the context of conceptual ecosystem models. Use a systems perspective to help identify key ecological processes and ecosystem components, thereby prioritizing future inventory and research. Conduct comprehensive context studies for archaeology and history to provide a broader basis for evaluating and interpreting the resources the park was established to protect and interpret. Use these studies to help place in context those resources that are outside the park's primary focus but which still may have significance or research value.
5. Fill in gaps in resource knowledge through inventory and research and tie to resource management needs.

Issue 4

How can the quality of research and resource management programs be improved and fully integrated with park management?

Background and Findings

Never in the history of the National Park Service has it been more important for science and scholarship to play an integral role in park man-



Glacier National Park

agement. Maintaining the integrity of park resources requires that resource management decisions be both defensible and prudent. They must be based on the best available knowledge. Unlike most other federal agencies that have science programs, the Service does not have any specific statutory language directing it to engage in science as part of its assigned mission. Instead, the Service has determined that it must have current information about park resources for use in supporting resource management decisions, environmental compliance documents, monitoring the results of resource management actions, and developing interpretive programs. Because of the applied nature of this purpose, the Service has developed a science program that is directly related to its resource management activities and therefore lacks independence and stable funding. This ambiguity is reflected in the history of science in the National Park Service, a history that has been marked by questions concerning its effectiveness and utility to park management and by great fluctuations in support and quality.

The National Park Service needs to achieve a clear mandate to establish a science program—one that has a clear purpose, addresses high priority needs, and has stable funding. Such a program will allow the Service to effectively address resource problems and base management decisions on sound scientific information.

Today, more than half of the units of the national park system are cultural or historically based even though they exist in what may well be significant natural settings. In addition, many of the "natural" parks contain significant cultural and historic resources. Although cultural resources management is a major responsibility of the Service, most cultural resource professionals believe that it has not received the same level of support as the natural sciences. Likewise, some cultural resource professionals, particularly historians, feel that they do not have the same opportunities to maintain and enhance their professional credibility as do colleagues in the natural sciences. The consensus of the Vail Symposium was that in order to have credible programs with stimulated personnel interacting with their peers, the Service must work to ensure that the professionalism expected of all personnel is the highest level possible.

Increasing the stature of Service professionals will also facilitate more interdisciplinary problem solving. A strong union between cultural and natural resource programs is essential for resource stewardship. The cultural and natural resources of parks confront similar problems. They

are finite, fragile, subject to deterioration, and threatened. They also suffer from a lack of basic resource inventories and from a failure to adequately monitor changes in their conditions. Moreover, the distinction between natural and cultural areas is becoming blurred. Sites originally set aside for cultural reasons are becoming important as natural areas and wildlife preserves, as open space diminishes. These new values influence the way historic landscapes are presented, interpreted, and maintained. Likewise virtually all natural areas are now recognized as having diversity of cultural values which may fundamentally alter the understanding and management of those sites.

Recommendations

The Service should develop a comprehensive, natural, historical, cultural, and social sciences resource management and research program and propose legislation that would strengthen and expand the congressional sanction and funding for this program. To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should do an analysis of those parks such as Channel Islands and Glacier Bay which have an individual research mandate in order to learn how such legislation has influenced each park.

The Service should base all resource management and planning decisions on full consideration of the best available natural and cultural information and research, conduct further research as needed.

To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should:

1. Provide a training course and appropriate training aids for park managers on the role of scientific natural and cultural research and on the research process, including design, methodology, peer review, and publication.
2. Provide training and experience for managers in the role of science and recognize and reward managers who effectively use science in the decision-making process.

To implement this recommendation both the National Park Service and individual parks should:

1. Bring scientific expertise and scholarship into management decision making as early as possible.
2. Maintain full open communication between researchers and managers during all scientific and scholarly investigations.

The Service should promote closer ties between cultural and natural resource professionals. To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should:

1. Expand the system of Cooperative Park Studies Units (CPSU) at universities to include cultural resource professionals in appropriate disciplines. Units established at universities already supporting a natural sciences CPSU should improve interactions between both categories of professionals.
2. Conduct joint meetings and workshops that focus on an interdisciplinary approach to problem solving.
3. Create new organizational structures which more closely link cultural and natural resource management responsibilities.

The Service should create a greater appreciation for research and scholarly activity and recognize and seek to raise the level of professionalism among resource professionals and managers. To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should:

1. Encourage and support resource professionals to develop closer ties with like professionals in academic institutions, and in state, private, and other federal agencies.
2. Consider placing resource professional positions in all disciplines under Research Grade Evaluation. Evaluations should consider assistance to managers and internal communication of findings to nonprofessional field staff as well as research studies and publications.
3. Explore alternative forms of evaluation for professionals whose disciplines do not involve research.
4. Encourage and fund resource professionals to attend major nonlocal professional meetings at least once every two years.
5. Encourage resource professionals to publish their findings in recognized, scholarly peer-reviewed outlets.
6. Expand interdisciplinary resource studies.
7. Fill open positions with individuals holding appropriate professional qualifications.

The Service should seek legislation endorsing the establishment of Coop-

erative Park Studies Units patterned after the Fish and Wildlife Service Cooperative Research Units.

The Service should promote a NPS network of information transfer patterned after or using the Fish and Wildlife Service National Information Transfer Network to allow research, resource, and educational professionals access to current information.

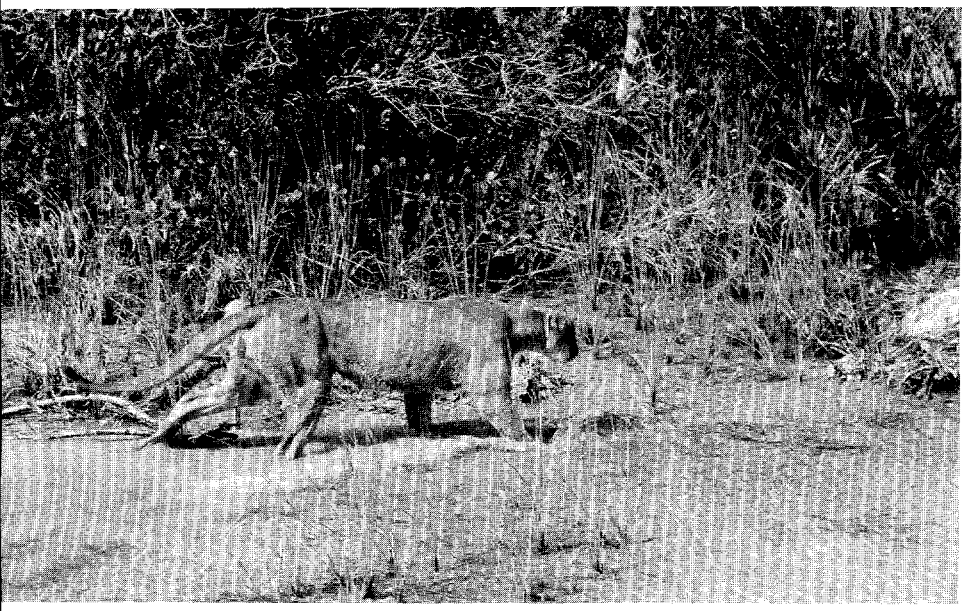
Issue 5

How can greater public support for resource stewardship be generated?

Background and Findings

The National Park Service has long been acknowledged as the country's leader in resource preservation. The Service has in the past used this respect and support generated from its reputation to help it pursue its mission, to gain needed fiscal resources, and to confront problems that impact the cultural and natural resources of parks. The agency also receives substantial outside support for the preservation of natural resources because the interests of many conservation groups largely coincide with those of the Service. Over the years groups such as the National Parks and Conservation Association, the Sierra Club, and the Wilderness Society have assisted the Service in acquiring new parks, adding buffer zones around parks, and by bringing legal action to help curb environmental problems threatening parks. The constituent groups supporting the role of the Service in the protection of cultural resources have also played an important role in the success of the agency.

In relying on its image and outside groups to support its mission, the National Park Service has been somewhat reticent to develop its own outreach programs. Such programs could enhance the agency's image by identifying the many positive contributions the Service has made in preserving the nation's heritage of cultural and natural resources. Outreach programs could also fulfill an acknowledged need to provide environmental education to the public. The general public is often unaware of the needs of cultural and natural resource management, and even less aware of the complexity of issues facing the parks. Park-related environmental ed-



Everglades National Park

ucation is lacking nationwide in public education, which will result in a weakening of support for parks. The National Park Service has, with its resources, a tremendous opportunity to reverse that trend.

The recommendations that follow are designed to improve the National Park Service's role as the leader in the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage by ensuring the highest quality protection of park resources through furthering public understanding of those resources and increasing public commitment to their preservation.

Recommendations

Greatly expand the local, state, regional, national, and international outreach programs. To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should:

1. Target public affairs training as a high priority throughout the Service.
2. Develop a pilot program to evaluate the utility of establishing a public affairs function in every unit.

3. Provide and encourage training for all managers in public and media relations.
4. Develop an active environmental and cultural heritage education program working directly with schools and children to acquaint them with park resources and concerns. Make park films and archives more widely available for educational purposes.
5. Develop public service announcements that spotlight NPS resource management achievements and problems.
6. Expand the use of existing National Park Service external programs including grants and technical assistance programs.

The Service should strengthen the constituency for resource stewardship by developing new partnerships and by utilizing the educational, interpretive, resource management, and research capabilities of the Service and its partners.

To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should:

1. Strengthen partnerships with national, state, and local cultural and natural resource preservation organizations, academic institutions, Indian tribes, and special interest groups.
2. Strengthen external program activities such as partnerships with state historic preservation officers and state liaison officers, and capitalize on National Historic Landmark and National Natural Landmarks designation.
3. Expand technical assistance programs to historic preservation and to natural and recreation areas.

To implement this recommendation individual parks should:

1. Make park facilities and archives more widely available for research and study.
2. Identify specific outreach targets and methods used to reach potential partners.

To implement this recommendation both the National Park Service and individual parks should:

1. Cosponsor activities and events on all levels with natural and cultural resource preservation groups.

2. Expand the concept of park citizen advisory groups to include additional parks.

The Service should greatly expand the role of the public in resource stewardship activities and eliminate the barriers to public participation. To implement this recommendation individual parks should hold local forums to inform and allow the public to discuss resource issues of interest. These should be informal and on a regular basis and not only when an environmental assessment is planned.

The Service should provide more information and better education to all NPS staff, and concessions, and cooperating association personnel on resource stewardship issues.

Issue 6

What factors should control the addition of new areas to the national park system or the expansion of existing areas of the park system?

Background and Findings

The original thirty-six parks united by the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act represented the great ceremonial landscapes, the wonders of a still-growing nation. The National Park Service entered into the field of historic preservation in a major way in 1933 when the military parks administered by the War Department were transferred to the agency. With the passage of the 1935 act creating the National Historic Landmark Program, the agency became a leader in the historic preservation program, and for the first time, undertook a systematic look at history—its identification, evaluation, and preservation.

With the establishment of Lake Mead NRA in 1936 and Cape Hatteras National Seashore in 1937, the role of the Service expanded to include the administration of areas designated primarily for recreation. The number of new parks grew steadily following World War II. This was also the era that launched partnerships with the states to implement the new recreation open space and historic preservation program initiated by the

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The latter act established the standards for a national historic preservation program and authorized the National Register of Historic Places. The role of the Service in urban recreation was expanded with the creation of Golden Gate and Gateway National Recreation Areas in 1972. The first national preserves were created at Big Thicket and Big Cypress in 1974, expanding the Service's responsibility to the management of ecological reserves. Finally, the new Alaskan parks added a different dimension in terms of wilderness management and human ecology with their provisions for subsistence and sport harvests.

In the past, areas added to the national park system have contained accepted and understood cultural and natural values. Proposals that lacked national significance or did not meet generally accepted definitions were resisted. Proposals were typically handled by the Office of New Area Studies and evaluations were guided by theme studies and system plans. This office was gradually dismantled in the 1980s, which diminished the Service's ability to evaluate proposals and to undertake theme studies.

Today, interest in the establishment of new NPS areas is high. Many of the new park proposals have posed difficulties to the Service because they are often far different in character from traditional areas as they may lack national significance. Their establishment also tends to draw money and personnel away from already established sites. The general conclusion of the Vail Symposium is that the Service has lost some control over the process of establishing new parks.

Recommendations

The Service should base the criteria for the selection of new areas on those resources and themes lacking representation in the national park system. To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should:

1. Revise the "National Park System Plan" using previous studies as a starting point.
2. Establish and adequately fund a systematic program of theme and context studies.

The Service should provide for the professional evaluation of new areas to ensure that they meet criteria for national or international significance,

resource integrity, suitability, and feasibility. To implement this recommendation the Service should:

1. Reinstate a new areas study program within the Service.
2. Support ongoing studies such as Fish and Wildlife Service's "Gap Analysis Program" which is developing methods to better assess and evaluate resources which require protection.
3. Work jointly with other agencies to develop a database of lands currently protected by all agencies.
4. Facilitate the ability of regional offices to evaluate new cultural areas by elevating the cultural resource programs in all regional offices to full dimension, with the capability to manage both internal and external programs.
5. Seek legislative authority to undertake suitability studies on lands managed by other federal agencies.

The Service should work with constituent groups and with federal, state, and local agencies to develop suitable strategies for determining how best to protect areas outside the national park system that may have significant resources. To implement this recommendation the National Park Service should establish a heritage areas program in cooperation with state and local agencies.

The Service should aggressively seek adequate funding for the stateside Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Historic Preservation Fund to protect significant resources outside the national park system.

The Service should develop and promote a NPS legislative program to deal with new areas.

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